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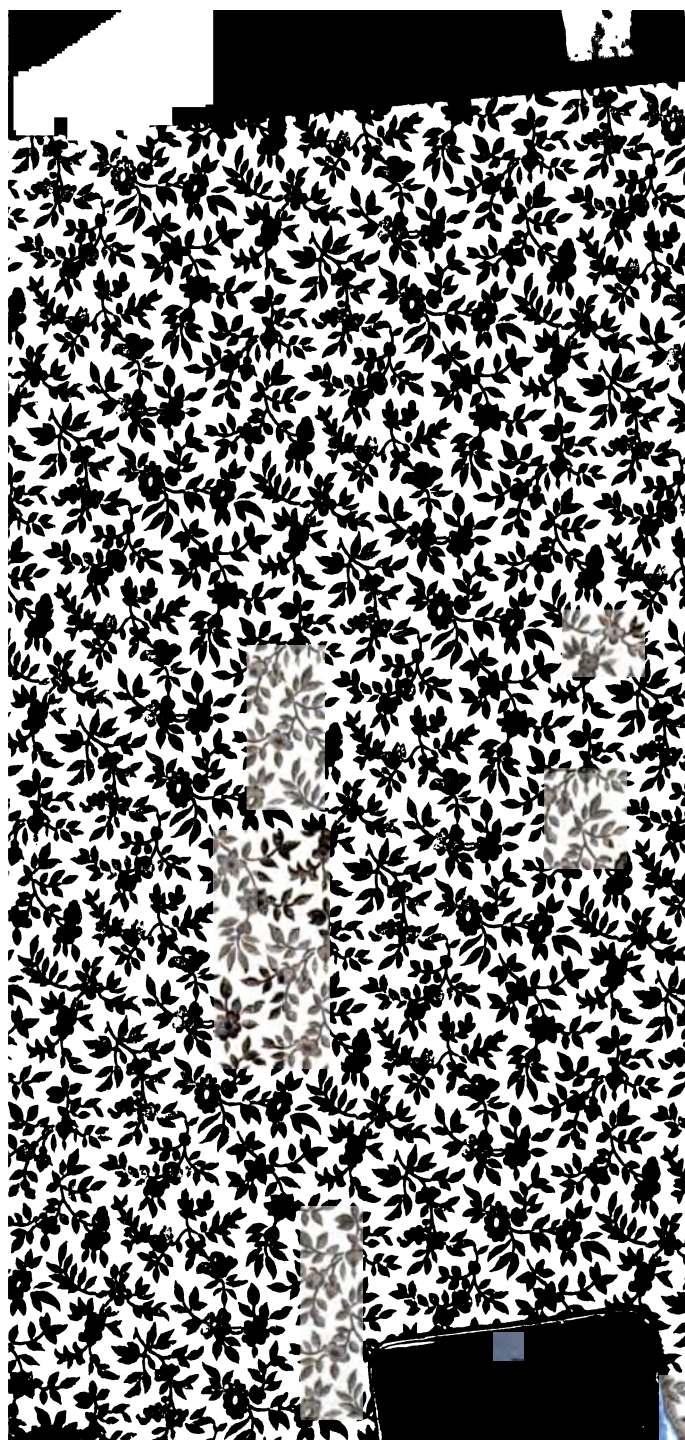
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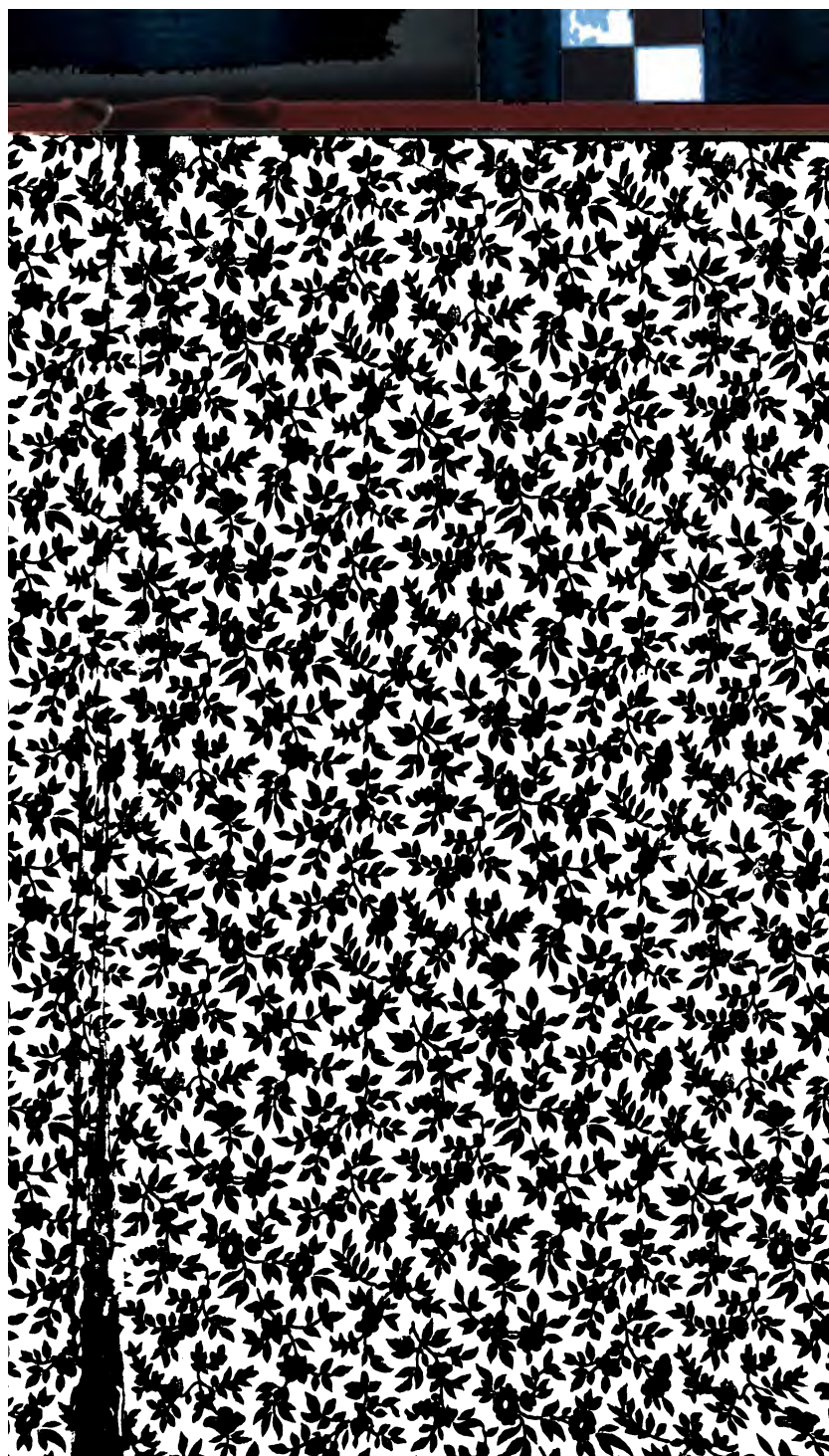
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The
FALL
of
KILMAN
KON
A NOVEL











THE
FALL OF KILMAN KON.

BY
ARTHUR CUMMINGS.



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THE FALL OF KILMAN KON.

CHAPTER I.

A MOUNTAIN THOROUGHFARE.

It has always been a curious fact that the nearer the approach to perfectness, whether in the growth of an idea or in the development of a piece of mechanism, the less becomes the complexity of the conception taken in its entirety ; and the sole wonder to the human mind remaining at every stage of progression is, that such an end should be reached only after much stupid groping, when all the time it must have been so readily perceivable. The formula that gives a result with quickness and ease, how many years, perhaps centuries, have been required to obtain it ; how much putting together and taking apart ; how much arranging and rearranging ; many times serving only to hasten disastrous failure.

Standing in a public assemblage, listening to a distinguished orator, after having endured, in patience, the blundering efforts of his less gifted fellow speakers, and feeling how every one there is held to him as by a spell ; standing in a well filled ball-room, or amidst any group of beings, and observing one form that holds the attention above all others from its nearer approach to completeness,—sets one to wondering whence the causes to these effects so far in advance of all that surrounds.

What is perfection ? and what has the length of a nose or the droop of an eyelid, the curl of a mustache or the dimple on a chin, to do with mind ? Surely the mind inscribes itself upon the countenance as on a tablet, but of its language we scarce know the A, B, C. Perfection we do not know, nor need we look for it in a marble contour ; only when the soul reveals itself in the face, can it be said here is beauty in its completeness. Thus the correspondence between mind and matter is deep ; for without mind, matter has no form ; even in the formation of the crystal there is some strange, intelligent, incomprehensible force. In a thoroughly organized and truly vigorous manhood, or womanhood, there must be good mental presence and self-possession

—no straining of any poorly developed faculty, no racking of the entire brain fabric ; symmetry of feature quickly loses its charm when the introduction of an idea brings on a mental collapse ; and though beauty may coerce admiration, the effect is voluntary and irresistible only when there exists a harmonious relation between mind and matter.

“Take a last long look, George, you may as well ; the steamer is just appearing round the bend ; it will be here presently to carry away your fair unknown, perhaps to the other end of the world.”

The speaker was an every-day man, neither good looking, nor homely, nor in any way possessed of noticeable characteristics ; his was just a round, open, honest countenance that pleased at once and left no disagreeable impressions of any sort. Sunburnt and well whiskered, there was the suggestion of robust health and abundant animal spirits ; virility and courage seemed to be to an eminent degree ; and above all, a nature at peace with his surroundings and with himself. Although there appeared to be a probability that this one had seen a goodly part of the things of this world most likely to excite interest, and had allowed few of its enjoyments to escape him,

there was nothing about him to indicate that he had suffered from his experiences.

Now the person to whom he had addressed his remark was a man apparently several years younger than himself, but though he was taller by several inches, his weight seemed hardly to equal that of his friend. An all alive man, well developed in every particular : honest and open-faced as his companion, none the less was he handsome to the extreme. At his companion's words he raised his eyes and turned his face in the direction whence the steamer was expected ; and then he heaved a sigh.

"Alas, so vanish all earthly delights ! Well, Wright, we have travelled a good many thousand miles together, but never before have we beheld a face to equal that. What absence of impure associations, what a correct yet consistent existence, what exaltation of spirit, what courage and pride and noble experiences,—all through many generations,—have brought about such a charming result."

"You cannot speak of beauty where a nose turns up like that, and then the chin, it is in bad proportion ; altogether the features are far too irregular."

"Yes ;—but the mouth and that smile.

Watch yonder porter; I trust he would go through fire and water did she bid him, and ask for no more reward from her than a kindly glance."

"I am much disposed to doubt your last. That fellow has handled too many boxes for pretty women, and his father before him, and no doubt his father before that. The circumstances of their surroundings through many generations, have caused to be produced in him one faculty much to the expense of all the others—the tinkle of silver alone can excite the same, I fear."

"I always said you were an insensible villain, now I am assured of it; your nature is certainly dead to every higher emotion. Look with what grace she stands there beside her father; and what eagerness and intelligence are expressed in those eyes as she watches the approach of the steambōat."

"Those eyes havn't given you the opportunity of an examination, I venture to say. I will offer odds that you cannot tell their color now, with all your going mad over the lovely gazelle."

"What is their color to me? I never had thought of it. I only know she gave me her eyes yesterday when I handed her her mountain stick, that she accidentally had let fall."

"Are you sure, by accident?"

“Don’t you dare to make any compromising allusions to me regarding her !”

“She is human, as well as the rest of us.”

“She is divine ! I would jump off the dock right here, could I but get another such a glance from her.”

“Well, if you were in the least bit clever and understood feminine nature at all, you might easily contrive to secure the same. I saw her eyes just now, while you were busy watching the boat; they are limpid, dreamy eyes of deep and changing blue ; and they were taking you all in. I do not doubt but what she could give a complete description of you in detail, even to the button off your coat, for all her indifference to mundane affairs. More likely than not she is realizing just what a fool you are making of yourself about her.”

In the meantime the steamer had made fast to the wharf, and the group of travellers were crowding together beside the railing, waiting their turn to embark, while its few passengers were busily clambering ashore or rushing hither and thither in search of stray baggage. Finally it came time for the two people under discussion to go aboard, and then the young lady took her father by the arm, and together they made their way cautiously down the narrow plank.

"By Jove, what a figure she has ! And withal, she's as unconscious as a marble Venus."

"She's clever enough to simulate unconsciousness when it must be quite plain to her that a great, rude, horrid man is watching her with all his eyes."

But George was too busy revolving certain questions in his mind to notice this last remark. When father and daughter had disappeared within the cabin, he turned suddenly to his friend.

"I have half a mind to take a trip on that boat myself. Hang it, yes ! just to learn where is her destination. Good-bye, Wright, for a day or so."

He started towards the gang-plank, but his companion ran after him.

"See here, old man, your father put you in my charge when you left home, and I made him a promise then that I would take care and see you came to no harm. Now if you are fully determined upon taking this desperate measure, I shall be compelled to follow you ; for you seem to have developed a sudden monomania, and it is more than probable that you will jump overboard in a fit of the same before you finish your journey. There is Kon, perhaps he will join us. Oh, Kernochan !"

A gentleman was standing near at hand watching the steamer in a lackadaisical sort of a way, as if dreadfully bored by its presence there. Hearing his name called, he turned and came towards them slowly.

"Kernochan, George and I are going on a bit of an excursion; will you become one of the party?"

"Thanks, no; I never travel on so short a notice; and what is more, I do not care to intrude, for it is quite plain what you are in search of. I knew this morning there was something in the wind, for you two are not the sort of romantic young creatures that get up at four o'clock to see the sun rise; it was not that sort of sunrise you had in contemplation. But mark you, my friends, you may follow that little bit of picturesque inconsistency around the world, and yet I'll venture to stake all that is spiritual in my composition that you don't make her acquaintance without the aid of some extraordinary occurrence. Good-bye; we will meet again I hope."

The gang-plank had been hauled in and the paddlewheels were beginning to turn; but these two, with the agility of youth, which they had not yet quite outgrown, caught the guard rail of the vessel as she began to move slowly away

from the wharf and swung themselves gracefully, or otherwise gymnastically aboard.

English, French, or American, which was she? The color of the eyes betrayed their Saxon origin, and the rosy cheeks suggested the damp atmosphere of the British lion's home. But Hood saw something in the brisk and independent air about her, that reminded him of his own native land, of freedom and independence. They were divided as to this, for George saw in her father a typical Frenchman, and he knew she talked the language like a native, for he had been very busy with his ears through the past day. Maude Hillern her name. Dr. Jean Hillern and daughter was all that the hotel register chose to reveal, but the sly creature was quite aware that her christian name was Maude; he had read it upon a letter passed over to her across the rostrum of that favorite hostelry. Jean would pass for French, but Maude fitted the English conformation of his vocal chords, certainly, and tapped familiarly upon his tympanum; Hillern taxed his powers to classify. A singular combination that they were unable to explain.

In company with her father she was travelling by easy stages through the mountains, apparently on account of the parent's health, for

he seemed a half invalid, keeping his room mostly, rarely appearing except in the dining-hall at meal time.

Having arrived there two days before, after a long pedestrian experiment, the two young men, together with the third party aforementioned, had been sitting gloomily in a quiet corner, as discontented as three fishes in an unfamiliar tank well could be, mentally confounding themselves for having been so foolishly carried away by a desire to see the world, quite ready to assassinate the person who first invented the practice, had he then and there appeared—unhappy thus, when the fair *nymphé du lac* had flitted by.

So *ennui* was suddenly turned to enthusiasm. All at once George began to find an interest in the place, and became possessed of a desire to cultivate a certain lady of less certain years, whom he had known in the past, and whom he had previously religiously shunned. But he accomplished little that evening, for the fair one did not again make her appearance ; thus his self-denial bore no fruit after all.

Standing with his friend Hood, later in the evening, chatting with the clerk of the hotel, he had heard the directions given to call certain

people in time for a sunrise party, and at his request that person had kindly permitted him to go over the list of names. Not long after this, taking a stroll out of doors before retiring, George had actually had the boldness to propose to his companion that they should get up the next morning to see the sun rise ; and what is more surprising the man had given his assent in the most matter of fact way, as if it were a regular habit, this getting up at four o'clock in the morning.

Never had been a night more fair, never was day more bright, never a spot more beautiful ; everywhere were towering mountain peaks kissing the blue heavens, and toying with the fleecy clouds that gathered lazily about their summits ; here and there were thick forests and sometimes the chalet of a mountaineer, or perhaps an ancient ruin hiding in their shades. Gleaming in the brilliant sunshine lay Lucerne, like a sapphire on a fair maiden's breast, bosomed by the mountain ranges, its waters stretching wide, a deeper blue than the deep blue of heaven. Thus their vessel sped away gayly from the receding settlement, from station to station, past villas and

sumptuous hotels and long rows of poplars, that told their tales of human progress ; across the dimpling surface of the lake to its northward end.

A great thoroughfare, along which the world must pass in its restless wanderings ; see Switzerland if you would be, so it is writ. Thus countless thousands come to behold, passing from pension to pension, eating at one, sleeping at another ; here listening in open mouthed blankness to the tale of Gillaume Telle ; gazing stupidly here at the Tellen Platte ; there at the ruin of some tyrant's castle that in time gone by has cradled another form of tyranny ; now plucking off some persevering insect eagerly tugging at the purse strings. On they go, hiding themselves in steam-boat cabins, in their bed chambers, in diligences and railway coaches ; never lifting their eyes upon a mountain top for fear of straining them ; never turning their heads to look upon a beautiful bit of scenery lest they wrench their necks ; never feeling an emotion, save of hunger, or of irritation at a chasseur or a maître d' hotel. On, on, that they may see and be great in the minds of those who have not seen ; on, on ; and in the white, massive, hideous piles ; and in the ravished forests

A Mountain Thoroughfare. 17

and mutilated banks ; in the orange peel and squeezed lemons, broken corks and bits of paper and sandwiches ; in the new order of being sprung to life of their travelling,—we behold civilization advanced.

CHAPTER II

SOMETHING ABOUT KITES.

They were two Americans ; and no reasonably intelligent person would have thought that they came from other than the United States. One was a man whom the concurrence of many circumstances had left so liberally provided for, that never had he been brought to the necessity of any exertion whatever, save for the purpose of keeping up the circulation and preventing stagnation. (A task by the way which, though rarely recognized as such, few people seem capable of fulfilling, unless goaded into the same by the unappeasable tyrant nature.) On the other hand, this one's friend, though independent so far as the world goes, had been urged to much exertion by a certain sense of accountability—the powers that be had gifted him with this in a moment of ill-humor, so the other said—a sense of accountability that had carried him through college with honors ; that finally won for him a certificate of admission to practice at the bar, and

a reputation for perseverance and for noteworthy mental equipoise and intelligence.

Two men as different in their inherent mental qualities as they were in their outward appearances; yet about these differences there was a peculiar adaptability that had held the two together by strong bonds through a greater portion of their lives. The boy had been drawn to the child by his persistent and prying energy; by him he had been led into mischief of all sorts—into many acts of childish vandalism. The baby never once had yielded his prerogative; while being propped on chairs, or hoisted on step-ladders, pursuing some line of conquest, his superior will always had overruled; instinctively the boy recognized a master in him, and dependent on his more active and stronger mental powers, was glad to become a follower.

So their lives had become knitted together: the younger, though at first relying upon his more experienced and better developed admirer for the strength and experience which was lacking with himself, gradually had outgrown him in experience, and if not in strength, at least in agility and nervous force, which goes far towards making up for such a want. But he still found in the grown man something which he himself

wanted ; a sort of tail to his kite, as it were, that made his flights better balanced and more steady ; and if this one was content to float meekly in his friend's wake, it was because he was too well aware that never, otherwise, could he fly at all.

Mr. Wright Hood had never been distinguished for anything but his dullness and good nature. In his boyhood his faculty for getting caught in scrapes, in which his part had been more passive than active, was historic. Not that Hood was dull or even always good-natured, but his inertness, or rather want of quickness, enabled others more quick than he to snatch the brightness from him. Any way he was so tender-hearted—this to a fault—that whatever natural excitability of temper there was, was held much in abeyance. However, in spite of all, he contrived to pass the ordeal of school and college examinations with a fair showing ; and at twenty two years of age he found himself turned loose upon society with his pockets full of money, and actually without any particular bent to his mind or any pronounced taste—without a single ambition.

So he had drifted ; a year in New York, at his club, on the road, yachting, athletics—all taken as a matter of course, as he took his breakfast or

his bath. Then his father died, and the circumstance added largely to a fortune which his mother had left to him years before. It was the first real sorrow of his life, for his mother had died when he was much too young to have formed any deep feeling for her. The sense of bereavement weighed deeply upon his mind, and developed in him sedentary habits which were on a fair way towards undermining his health, when, through the urgency of friends and the advice of his physician, he was at last induced to travel.

With no definite end in view he set out; taking the most famous ocean ferry to cross to the other side, not because he sought greater safety, not because he hoped to find greater comfort, but because a friend of his had recommended it. Following beaten tracks mostly, not venturing any detours for the sake of making discoveries, lest he should become bewildered, thus a small segment of the terraqueous globe had been encompassed by him. The momentum had been given, and there not being friction enough to check the inertia, like the Brook or the Wandering Jew, he might have gone on forever, had not the love of art—strong in him, as strong goes with such a one—exerted a scarce perceptible

influence, slowly but surely drawing him towards the allurements of Europe's giddy capital. Describing an involute curve, gradually he had come nearer and nearer, once completely circumscribing it, till at last he had been drawn into the vortex.

Paris welcomed him, and here he paused, for here he found new interests—not paused, but continuing to turn, remained fixed to this one point of the earth, carried round by the great whirlpool, a mere bob in its restless maw. The very atmosphere infected him with its inquietude and wrought great changes to his being. He discovered old-time friends and cronies; he found new haunts, and laid out regular beats, and revived old habits; he was initiated into the mysteries of the Bourse, and here he speculated a little for the sake of amusement; in short, he became acquainted with all the dissipations of the modern Babylon. But he did not plunge deeply, for he was not of the wild, plunging sort, —played with them coyly at first, sipped lightly of the cup of joy, not knowing the effect, not trusting himself; then more bold, as becoming more accustomed, he drank without heed, without hesitation, till the chance of his becoming enslaved grew day by day. The tail without the

kite, there was no telling how soon it would be gathered up by the social rag-picker, together with numerous other abandoned scraps left knocking about from dust-heap to dust-heap, to be turned into the mill and at last metamorphosed into ignominious paper heroes.

Three years thus slipped by. George had passed his final examinations and was admitted at the bar : he needed rest and Hood needed him. So their correspondence, extensive at first, which had gradually dropped into a few desultory and far between endeavors toward revival, now again was brought to life. With much pleading on his own part, with many promises to the young man's father, finally Hood had succeeded in inducing George to join him in his sojourn here.

No longer now a dispassioned billet whirling about in the vortex of Gehenna ; a new life was opened up to him ; he was taught to feel, to hear, to observe. Dragged out by force as from a mass of tangled briar, stood upon the open road and bid to walk, he did not hesitate but set courageously forth. Unheard of nooks were sought out, free from the tarnish of world contact ; new mountains were climbed and impenetrable forest solitudes and forgotten ruins explored. Rivers

their mysterious worlds observed mountain passes and glacial awful solitudes, a charm, fill these men with deep emotions. wanderings but that something was brought to light ; here in rock some geological fallacy ; flower ; in this village would be gotten tablet marking the rest long forgotten yet deserving he it was to seek out the haunts famous shadow—there in the g remembrance cast they would live pregnant dream life.

Frequently amongst their o have special objects of endearment love is a part necessity of their b have something on which to lay overplus of their affectionate r other hand. men form attachment

some incompleteness in their own lives. The one is less enduring, far more easily turned to hatred—being emotional—by an interloping flame; the other, more dispassioned, gradually growing out of mutual needs, is of a solidier and more lasting nature—with constant association rises in time a reciprocal dependence and sympathy. So it is that two people of the same sex are sometimes observed to keep constant company, generally with men the one following the other in a sort of hero worship, as a dog follows his master; seeing in him his liege sovereign, becoming a sort of reflection of the more substantial being.

George Bourondeer, with a nature keenly sensitive, being highly organized, could see, feel, and comprehend things beyond the power of ordinary mortals. Hood, while quite irresponsible by himself, when the obscure was brought to view by the stronger magnetism of the more delicate condition, could appreciate. The one needed a reservoir for the overflow of his lively imagination; the other needed the ideas; both benefited by the companionship.

Above all things, these two men were passionately fond of nature. In their younger days, usually the summer vacations, for the greater part, had been spent together, roughing it either on the water

or amongst the little visited mountains of their own country. It was curiosity more than anything else that had now brought them into this great panoramic casino of Europe, with its Cook's tourists, and its climbing tramways, and its fenced in glaciers, and its views at so much a look ; and above all, its new order of being, so trying to the temper and destructive of all sentiment. Here was a desecrated shrine ; the Philistines had plundered it of its priceless treasures, and the money-changers had stood their tables beneath its most sacred altars. Surely there could be nothing but sadness here for them.

Collectively, of course.

"Where shall it be?" Hood said when he had fed and comforted the sea-farer in his own snug quarters : "Switzerland do you say?"

"Switzerland ! surely you cannot mean that ! Or do you wish to go there to weep and pray with her in her desolation and despair. Not Switzerland ; it makes me grieve to think of her."

And Hood had only thought that he might wish to go there from curiosity ; of course he had not supposed for an instant that he would care to follow the regularly travelled routes, or to put up at the usual hotels for any great period. They

could go up into Norway and find there many interesting places little troubled by tourists. Germany, too, offered many attractions ; numerous other points were mentioned. And rigorously they had avoided Switzerland for more than a year. Norway had welcomed them, and they had viewed the midnight sun ; Germany they visited and Spain and Italy, and afterwards Egypt. They ascended the Nile and gazed upon the pyramids—many overwhelming thoughts had risen in their bosoms here.

But the Mediterranean had afforded them more real enjoyment than any of these other experiences. Some kindred spirits had been met with, and together they had yachted upon its waters and flirted with the warm-hearted dark-eyed daughters along its shores. Thus the days had passed swiftly by, and now the time of idleness, for one at least, was fast drawing to a close. So by slow stages they were travelling towards England, there to take the steamer for home ; and if, after all, they chanced to be passing through these historic mountains, it was because their most convenient route lay here ; even then, George had only consented in order to humor a fancy of his friend.

CHAPTER III.

HISTORICAL.

Once, from one of the medical schools of Paris, graduated with honors a young man, notable amongst his fellow students for his talent, his success under few favorable auspices, and for the mysterious nebulosity obscuring his early origin. To the man his past was a sort of weird indistinct dream, which had in it one or two bright recollections, about which ever floated swarms of malignant demons and masses of hideous, angry clouds. In idle moments, even during periods of the hardest application, would come to him the remembrance of a great crowd of people; and, above all, one tender face, the features of which had impressed themselves indelibly upon his memory.

A young woman, apparently of refinement and good breeding, dying in a squalid apartment, leaving a helpless child just learning to prattle, without a protector. Turned over to the municipal mamma, the poor waif might have wasted out

its young life at that barren and unsympathetic breast, but for a poor, and soft-hearted, lonely creature, who pleaded so hard and promised so much that it was finally delivered into her hands to be brought up according to her own fancy. Not unwilling it is believed, though the profound looks concurring, and the exhalation of much bad breath and worse rhetoric, and the expenditure of more or less administrative ink might have seemed to suggest otherwise.

So the young shoot, so near being harvested for the State, this time escaped the fate of being swallowed up and assimilated in that gorged maw. In this poor and rocky soil it took root, and here it grew and flourished, gradually developing those strong and striking qualities which afterwards characterized the mature growth—which at six years of age so attracted the wife of a wealthy person belonging to the bourgeois order, that she was tempted to advance a no inconsiderable sum for its surrender.

Here was experienced all the comforts of the well to do ; the child was pampered and petted and made much of by a childless and indulgent woman ; was on a fair way towards going to unfruitful stalk in this over cultivation, when sickness and reverses came and he might soon

have died of starvation, had not his guardian star prompted an old friend of his protector to come forward and provide for his needs, until such a time as he would be able to look after himself.

Working one's way through college is no easy task at best, but where one has a faculty of winning friends it helps considerably. This young man, while misfortune seemed to pursue him persistently, every time rose Phoenix like from the ashes of his burned out expectations. He acquired knowledge easily, which made his way less toilsome ; and having an inventive mind he contrived in one way or another to supply his needs. Withal he managed to find time for leisure, which he did not fail to use profitably. He seemed to take to clinics and chemicals as naturally as a duck takes to water ; and more than once he had succeeded in unseating the reason of some academic mechanism by the originality of his ideas.

From the start the man rose superior to existing conditions ; his growth and development was of the most vigorous and healthful sort ; and with much hard work, and with making many friends, both amongst the executive and amongst the students, he found himself, at the good and hopeful age of twenty-five, well prepared mentally

and physically to meet the world's adversities. At twenty-eight he was on a fair way towards prosperity ; and here came one real happiness into his life.

Amongst his fellow students had been an American. He had always watched with much interest this young foreigner from the Republic across the blue deep, that was so rapidly taking a place with the foremost of nations ; and a strong feeling of friendship had sprung up between these two during those years, for there was much of a kindred spirit between them. At last they separated, the one to return to his native land, the other to begin his labors in the hospitals of his own city ; but they corresponded with much regularity, following each other's careers with deep interest. Often came earnest appeals and tempting descriptions to the young Parisian ; and many a night did he lay awake thinking about abandoning his poorly rewarded labors and setting forth for the more hospitable shores of the United States. But some must go forth to people space, and some must remain at home. One interest after another sprang up about him until the chance of his ever making a permanent change began to grow less and less from day to day.

There came a letter one day to this budding young physician, saying that a brother of his friend was about to locate in Paris with his family, coming there on some embassy or other, and that he would be glad to meet him. Indeed, it had proved an agreeable accident for the young man, as in time it brought him no inconsiderable practice with the floating population from America passing through the city. It brought him his destiny ; for by this means he was one day called upon to attend an old gentleman who was travelling through Europe with his daughter for the benefit of his health. Enough is it to say love at first sight on the part of the young people and a consequent exception taken by parent to practitioner.

Now there was a certain vein of native perversity running through this family ; the daughter chose to give up her parent rather than her love, and he would have given up everything before his obstinacy ; neither would yield an inch. So the one took the doctor and the other took himself to the bosom of his family, vowing the profoundest vengeance. The two were married, and in a modest little apartment, where the husband was permitted to put out his sign upon the

window, they made their abode. The man prospered and the time was gliding by most happily ; a child was born to them, but its career in this world proved most brief. Some infantile disorder seized upon it and, in spite of the parent's skill, it gave one long, sorrowful gasp and died.

Two years rolled swiftly by and then there came another child, but here, saddest of all, its poor mother passed away. And the man, hardened by constant acquaintance with suffering, still was scarcely hardened enough to bear this deep sorrow ; it turned the current of his life ; the confinement and routine of his profession he no longer could endure. Throwing up a large and increasing practice, he crossed the ocean with his daughter, and sought out the habitation of his old friend, hoping to forget in a new life his great bereavement. Here he prospered in other fields, devoting himself to scientific research, turning to good account his past experience and training. But he grew restless. The tree taken up by the roots and transplanted, could not become adapted to the new soil and changed surroundings. He turned backwards to his native shore. He could not remain long in any one place now ; he had become a Bohemian ; he wan-

dered far and near, living in England for a considerable time, in Germany as long, not in France again until his daughter, whom he always kept with him, had grown to womanhood.

An odd pair they always seemed ; the father, though stern and exacting, devoted to his daughter beyond measure, never happy when separated from her for any great length of time ; and she equally as fond, never seeming to care for any other than her parent, believing in her heart that she never could.

But the doctor's health began to fail at last, for a too close application in a marked and most useful career had exhausted the vitality and allowed the seeds of disease to take root. So, thinking it best to seek a warmer region during the winter months, for rest and recuperation, like the migratory birds, the two fled southward into sunny Italy. And of great benefit the change of scene and climate proved to Dr. Hillern ; but he was far from well when, the following spring, as the warm weather came, they found it necessary to return northward.

Passing into Switzerland, it was their intention to proceed to some of the German watering-places ; but here they remained, for here the doc-

tor found the bracing air of the mountain regions a great aid towards recovery.

Poor George Bourondeer ! he saw vanish from sight the fair form that had filled his mind with vague fancies and awakened in his breast emotions new to him. He would have followed, leaving the boat at the same landing, where she and her father had disembarked ; but Hood had restrained him, suggesting that such a performance would be so obvious in its intent that they might encounter a request on the part of an irate parent to obligingly discontinue the perquisition. So they continued up the lake ; but George was inconsolable ; declaring that he had met his doom and no longer could happiness be his. By way of consoling him in his sorrow, Hood suggested that they should get off at the next landing, and strolling back, see if they could again find the lady, or perhaps learn something of her final destination or permanent abode. Which happy thought was seized upon with avidity, and being duly assimilated and acquiesced in, they proceeded forthwith to carry out the idea.

But they were not so fortunate as to catch so much as a fleeting glimpse of this fair object of their search again—not even passing by amidst a

group of strolling tourists, not even at a window gazing out upon the cold shuddering clouds that anon kept creeping through the valley. Eagerly they searched, haunting every likely nook, wandering within a radius of many miles about the place where last she had been seen ; but all in vain. Even the submissive and even-tempered Hood at last called a halt, declaring he had an object in life, and that henceforward he was determined that his destiny should not be thwarted in the profitless pursuit of a very indifferent illusion. George at all times had an ear for reason, but just then he was very loath to give it to his friend's expostulation. However, forced to acknowledge his folly, finally he agreed that they should abandon the chase and pick up the dropped stitches of their original intentions.

As a sedative for his melancholy state of high enthusiasm, Hood recommended the Righi ;—not prescribed it alone, but, at last, forcibly dragged his friend on board the steamer for the purpose of bringing him to that celebrated mountain. At Lucerne, to make his remedy more effective, he advised taking the railway to its summits, rather than any other less civilized means. "That crawling, conscienceless, tooth-wheeled serpent ! Never !" If they were to ascend the mountain at

all, they should walk. George recoiled in horror at the very thought. But Hood was of another mind ; he had heard so much of this great upheaval that he never would dare to venture home without having surmounted it ; it would be such bad form not to make examination of its world-famous prospect ; it would forever ruin his reputation as a tourist. Yes ; he must ascend. But standing on his feet so long, waiting for that which never came, rushing from place to place in search of more possible points of discovery, — had stiffened his limbs to such an extent and rendered him so foot-sore that walking was not to be thought of ; as for the mules they were well enough for women, not fitting for men in the full vigor of life. By no other means would he go than by the steam ascent.

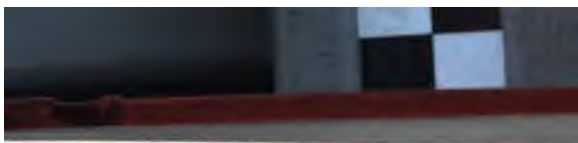
He had made a stand and nothing could turn him from his purpose. For the first time in George's recollections this one was asserting himself ; these were the first occasions where he had been known to bring himself seriously in opposition to anything. Once more George himself was forced to give way.

As the king of France is reputed to have done, as others have done since then, they went up the hill, — and then went down again. They saw the

golden sun sink to rest behind a bank of somber clouds ; they saw the moon rise and lose itself within a deeply troubled sky. People they saw in hundreds, come there from every corner of the earth in response to the ravings of a poet's soul. English spoken here as everywhere, one could almost have fancied one's self in some American mountain caravansary,—even they met former acquaintances from their own native land.

A memorable storm broke upon the mountain, and they were compelled to remain dismally indoors, through the long hours, with the sad and dismal pleasure seekers. The lightning in vivid flashes played ceaselessly, and beneath them the thunder boomed at regular intervals, waking the echoes of every Alpine hill, making the mountain quake and the guests ponder and tremble in the cold, damp rooms.

When the morning came the Kulm was enveloped in mist, and without nothing was visible save the paved walk and the muddy roadway leading up to the building. Sleet and drizzle everywhere ; as if the sun and sky were but a myth ; as if humanity had reverted to its old amphibious state. The ground was covered with rime and the eaves were fringed with dripping ice, windows were obscured by the condensing



moisture, the dampness clung to the walls in drops—nothing but a forlorn and dispiriting aspect all about.

The two men breakfasted and set forth as soon as possible ; they had seen Switzerland, and they sighed for their old home and its occupations that kept away tedium. They would return to Paris by the shortest route, and from there to London and the steamer that was to bear them across the ocean, which alone separated them from contentment.

George had prevailed this time : there was an aching void within his breast, and to ward off collapse he needed to keep moving. They should go down the mountain on foot.

Out into the mist and rain : dragging themselves through the mire and yellow fog, down mournful slopes and clambering over huge boulders ; crossing Alpine torrents swollen with the night's storm ; wandering through morasses ; and, at last, tearing their way through canebrakes and clumps of dwarfed trees. It grew warmer as they went, and in time the rain ceased ; finally the clouds began to break and, through a rift, the lake became visible, enveloped in huge banks of white vapor, looking most of all like a miniature polar sea ; then the sun burst

forth, and the green borders of the lake became visible. Everywhere pensions and mountain chalets glistened cheerfully in the golden radiance descending from on high.

Finding an irrigating pipe on the way, they followed it for some time. They had struck out with no definite end in view. They reached a little Alpine village about the middle of the afternoon and here, they dined. But by this time their spirits had thawed out and the exhilarating atmosphere was prompting new feelings within—there came a desire once more to live and be, to climb new mountains, to scale mighty precipices, to encounter dangers of every sort that might call their courage to the front.

So from day to day they lingered in the mountains, finding in spite of all new interests every day. They followed no preconsidered route; going from point to point, wherever a beautiful prospect seemed most likely or perhaps an ancient ruin, wherever their fancies led; exploring an unknown country, as it were, and experiencing the delights which new discoveries bring.

It was one evening, following a long day's walk, that George and his friend happened to be promenading on the porch of a hotel in the

neighborhood of the Rhine Falls. Finishing their cigars, they took several turns up and down, and were about to go inside, when, passing by a window, all at once George seized Hood's arm.

"*Coquin de sort!* Do you recognize the outline of that head?"

There was a vision of brown hair floating within, but the face of its owner was turned from them. They drew nearer to the window.

"Heavens! there is Kernochan. The arrant knave?" It was Hood who exclaimed this time.

"The villain, it is she! How did he contrive to make her acquaintance? We must punish him for this."

"For this, the most infamous of tales shall be put in circulation regarding him."

"*Voila!* I have it! Let us send in to him the cards of his sister and her mother-in-law; we can wait here and make a note of the effect that it will have upon him."

"Capital; but he will recognize your handwriting."

"Leave that to me; I know the manager's wife." Hood disappeared immediately, leaving George to his own reflections.

Kernochan seemed to be having the most delightful time imaginable, and watching him,

George became permeated with jealousy of an extremely harassing nature. There, before him, was the fair form that had haunted his dreams though the last fortnight ; that had tyrannized all his thoughts ; the sweet creature whose loss had made the world seem all a desert, who had stolen into his life and ravished him of every hope—there she was in the public salon talking to this man as if they had known each other all their lives ; and he had wandered far and wide, only that he might be near to her and watch every movement with timorous delight, after all, to lose her hopelessly. Truly it was more than human nature could bear ; and if Hood had not speedily put in an appearance, without doubt he would have made a flying leap through the window—harlequin like—and have dashed up to these two unwitting ones to tear them madly asunder.

“Watch, now, and be prepared to observe a sudden outburst of surprise.”

Hood was holding his friend’s arm and vainly endeavoring to suppress his amusement. But the laughing in his sleeve quickly infected George, and they both began to shake with inward emotion. Presently an attendant appeared in the salon, walking across its broad floor, bearing in his hand a silver salver, on which reposed two

bits of pasteboard. Coming up to Kernochan he presented the cards with all due grace.

The effect was ludicrous beyond measure. For several moments the man seemed to fluctuate between duty and desire. Having at last formed a clear idea in his mind as to the writing upon the cards, he made an unceremonious dash for the door ; but here his sense of gallantry brought him suddenly to a halt, and he rushed back as if to apologize to his companion for his very abrupt departure ; then he disappeared. Maude bowed to him, and after he had gone she rose, and walking across the room, joined some ladies who sat chatting together in one corner.

“That little *tête-a-tête* is spoiled at any rate. Perhaps it was unkindness to the fair one to rob her of such entertaining company, but it serves him right, the crafty, insinuating wretch.”

“By Jove ! she is none the less fascinating in evening attire.”

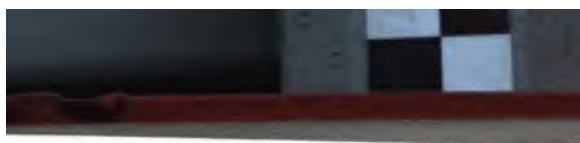
Maude had placed herself so that they could see her face now.

“She does not make a very bad showing, whatever be her surroundings. But finding it was a very masculine sister will not improve the temper of Mr. Kon in the least I fancy. Bless me, there is Mrs. Marsh, of Boston ; she is talking

with her ; never could be a better opportunity. Quick, George ! let us make our revenge complete by joining that group before his excellency returns."

They went into the hotel at a side entrance, and, as they stole through the hall, they could see Kilman exploring the different ante-chambers, as if in search of the wicked perpetrator of such a contemptible joke. They entered the salon and a recognition followed between Mrs. Marsh and the two men ; then they sauntered across the floor to where she was sitting and politely addressed her. It was a little company of travellers from the United States, and having common friends a feeling of friendship sprang up between them. Much to the delight of one at least, the two gentlemen soon gained an introduction to Miss Hillern. But Kilman did not return as they hoped and expected ; though they watched the entrance eagerly for some time they were not gratified in beholding his chagrin. Once Hood happened to cast a glance towards one of the windows, and there in the darkness without he imagined that he saw a very green and much distorted countenance ; so he nudged his friend and winked accordingly.

A most delightful evening was spent in that company, and they felt quite sorry when it came



time for the ladies to retire. They lingered for a few moments in the deserted salon after the ladies had gone, and then they set out in search of Kilman Kon. Carefully they examined every nook and corner where it seemed likely for him to be, but his shadow was not. They actually had the audacity to ascend to that person's room ; and there, standing in the corridor before his door, they thought they heard the sound of heavy breathing coming from within. They pounded long and loud,—as long as patience lasted, as loud as they dared with propriety in that well peopled corridor,—but no response came to their persuading.

Next morning a thin mist hung in the valleys, but quickly the sun rose and dispersed it. When these two men had breakfasted, they left their own hotel, intending to call upon Mr. Kon, in the hope of renewing the old friendship. They were anxious to hear how it was that he chanced to be in that locality, and how he had contrived to make so interesting an acquaintance ; also to see whether there were any tell-tale signs upon his countenance of his having passed a sleepless night. They discovered him at last after a long search hidden beneath a wide spreading apron, disguised by a great quantity of lather. In no way was he

recognizable as he lay stretched out at full length in the barber's chair, while the tonsorial expert, with fingers deft, familiarly rubbed his chin. They waited their time ; and when he had come out upon the porch and had placed himself in the sun to thaw, they pounced upon him without further ceremony.

What happy fatality had brought him there ? They were so delighted to meet him again ; they had observed his name upon the register the night before, but they had not been able to find him then ; supposed he had retired for the night ; came over to see him, of course, the first thing in the morning. Kernochan was all sunshine as well. He was equally delighted to behold them once more ; he had been so lonesome since they had gone off so hurriedly. How did he happen to be there ? Well, he could not tell for the life of him ; hardly knew that he was there. He had taken the first boat that had left after he had gotten his tiresome luggage together ; had put up at one beastly hotel after another ; had nearly died of starvation—he kept moving on all the time, for it was the only way to live at all in such a wretched country. However, he had fared better here—better table, decent barber, more respectful help, good bootblack ; was beginning

quite to like the place ; might linger for some little time.

Never had more genial people come together. No one seeing them there would have ever imagined any tergiversation stalking in the background. Not so much as an allusion of the slightest kind was made by either side as to the performance of the evening before. What sort of people were there in his hotel ? were there any Americans ?—Well, he scarcely knew. There were plenty of English speaking people ; he had met several old acquaintances ; he believed one or two were from his own native land, but he really could not say as to that. Never was innocence better personified.

And Mr. George Bourondeer and Mr. Wright Hood likewise began to find the place bearable, and concluded to linger here for awhile. George was not a man who allowed his opportunities to escape him, and he had lost little time in improving his acquaintance with Miss Hillern. Nor had he been long in discovering that that young lady and her father proposed to remain in this neighborhood for the remainder of the summer. The latter, it seems, had taken a notion to this particular spot and did not care to travel further for

the present. Indeed it was as well, for he was now fast growing too feeble to travel for any great length.

There were many opportunities here for romantic little rambles, and sometimes longer excursions were made when others joined. Short evening walks would occur now and then, and on such occasions George would take the young lady on his arm ; while Hood, with a faithfulness that seems sublime to an ordinary mortal, would take the chaperon. He, poor dutiful henchman, seemed to remain content, as if happy in the happiness of his chief. But moody fits of late, at times, would seize him, and his wonted cheerfulness day by day began to lessen, until it became quite apparent to his friends. As for Kilman, he staid for one week in the neighborhood, and then the barber of his hotel having cut his throat—his own, not Kilman's—in a moment of despair or delirium, life there became no longer bearable for him ; and so he set out at the end of that time, by the most direct route, for Paris.

But the end came at last. Dr. Hillern, one day, had an alarming relapse, and the wisest course seemed to be to take him, before it was too late, back to Paris, where better attendance and greater comforts could be obtained. In truth

it was his own wish ; he spoke wisely when he said that home was the only place for a sick person. The season was nearly at its end now, and no more extremely hot weather was to be expected in town, so that it was all the more advisable to hasten thither.

George and Wright were on their way to Paris, and of course they found it convenient to travel in company. The fact is these two proved themselves of great assistance to father and daughter, especially to the latter, whose parent it was plain was the victim of a fatal disorder, and who had no other kin to turn to in the hour of need,—who was feeling deeply the want of some one stronger than herself to aid her in this most trying situation.

At last they saw the Hillerns established in good comfortable quarters, in a quiet portion of the city, and, during the few days that remained before their intended departure for home, they found many excuses, now this, now that, for paying short visits to these new-found friends. George, in particular, seemed to be most desirous of making the best of the few brief moments ; and indeed the doctor was regretting the necessity of his going, for even in that short time he had formed an attachment to this kind-hearted

and affable young man, and never appeared happier than when in his company. But George had delayed much longer than he intended ; it was imperative that he should return, for an opening was awaiting him at home which he could not longer overlook.

What passed between George and Miss Maude at the last parting is hard to say. Though their acquaintance had been short, they certainly had become interested in each other at least a little bit ; but if there had been any confessions, they had been the outspakings of the spirit which never can be mistaken, not mere verbal effusions which are so often false.

The day came only too soon, and the two men took their departure *en route* for London ; but here they were to part, for at the last moment Hood had discovered that some matters in Paris would require his attention at least for a short time to come. On the whole he had a dread of returning to America, since his home was broken up and his loved ones all dead. There were no ties to hold him there now.

“You must promise, Wright, that you will soon follow me ; I want you too much at home to have you waste your life away in a purposeless durance here. And remember there are to be no

retrogressions ; whatever may be your temptations, see that you do not make the world worse for your having been."

The bell of the steamship had sounded its last warning for the visitors on board to go ashore. George grasped his friend's hand as he sprang over the ship's side, the last one to leave the vessel.

"Remember, remember," he whispered.

The word kept ringing in Hood's ears as he stood upon the pier waving a last farewell and watching the ship drive swiftly away upon the tide. At last he turned and walked away. As he went he brushed a tear from his eye. Poor solitary man, he knew not where to turn in his bereavement.

CHAPTER IV.

A MONSTROUS PLEASANTRY.

The rain was drizzling down and freezing as it fell; everything was encrusted with ice as if for all it were a crystal city. At that late hour walking without a fall for any great length was a task to make the most agile hesitate. Not a person had passed along the Boulevard for a long time, and the street lamps, patient in their solitude, began to flicker and splutter as if they were considering as to the usefulness of longer keeping up the struggle against the mist and cold.

But at last, out of the darkness, a crouching shadow came forth, pursuing a devious pathway with a determination that seemed to indicate a definite end in view. Many times the struggling being lost his footing, sometimes falling upon his knees, sometimes suddenly coming to a sitting posture upon the cold stones; but each time contriving to regain his understanding by the aid of railings or newel posts and pushing bravely on. Reaching a corner after awhile, it became obvious to the shadow, all at once, that his path lay

across the wide, open esplanade before him, and here he paused, seemingly to consider the advisability of venturing upon so dangerous a sea without any means of supporting himself, and without anything to guide him on his way. But the idea of a continued advance was foremost in his mind, and so, after several moments spent in contemplation seated on the curb, he once more struggled to his feet and set forth upon his adventurous voyage. Drawing away slowly and cautiously from the ill-defined coast line, he had not gone far when his position in relation to the pavement became changed, and henceforth he found it convenient to proceed upon hands and knees.

Without further accident the middle of the square was reached, but there began a gentle slope towards the other side, and here another effort was made to gain the perpendicular; but here came a sudden gust of wind that, in an instant, threw him flat upon his back, and then he went swiftly sliding away in the darkness, carried along before the angry storm. The curb arrested his progress at last; but now all ambition seemed to have been congealed within him, for without further effort he calmly laid his head upon the curb as if the cruel stone were a pillow of the

softest down and the pavement a mattress fit for a king. Soon lost in happy dream-land this easily satisfied being actually snored.

It was time for the inspector to be making his rounds, and so the gendarme had stolen from his lurking place and was patrolling on his beat. Presently he perceived a dark heap lying on the pavement. He was too experienced, however, to be puzzled as to its identity, or even the causes which had led to the choosing of so singular a couch. With the toe of his heavy boot he gave a none too gentle tap upon the sole of the more delicate bottine that was visible at one end ; which eliciting no response, he made application of the butt of his musket to the most susceptible region ; which failing likewise, he poked his musket underneath the body and with skillful prying, sent it rolling upon the sidewalk ; then he knelt down and lifted the body to a sitting posture. The change of position seemed to bring the man's spirit back to its mortal coil, for a faint sign of life was evinced in a slight movement of the arms. Sleep was dominating, however, for after one or two endeavors to support himself, he fell backwards and would have slumbered again had not the official, now much angered, suddenly picked him up, and with a sharp and rapid move-

ment, stood him upon his feet. Such violent treatment brought the man to a state of maudlin consciousness and irritability, and, after deliberating between assaulting this disturber of his peace and resuming his interrupted travels, he chose the latter proceeding, and forthwith turning his back, he started to walk away.

The street was in such a perturbed state now, however, and the sidewalk was going through so many evolutions, that he soon found himself clinging to a railing to keep from flying off into space. It became plain to the officer that this person was reduced to such a condition of irresponsibility that it was needful to take him in hand ; so, going to him, he seized him roughly, and half dragging, half carrying him, he started in the direction of the nearest station house.

Mr. Kilman Kon that same evening had taken a cab to convey him to his own headquarters instead of walking as was his usual custom ; but the cab, as cabs will sometimes do, lost an axle, and thenceforth he was compelled to continue his journey through ice and sleet on his own particular conveyances. He was proceeding with a caution that only Kilman knew, and doing well considering the disadvantages under which he

labored, when turning a corner, carefully using a lamp-post as a guide to alter the direction of his advance, all at once he came plump into the arms of the gendarme struggling onward with his charge.

It was not an unusual sight to see an inebriated person in the hands of the state, but something about this one caused Kilman to give a second glance as the two passed him by. "Paul," he gasped, and he ran after the twain. The next few moments were spent in a most desperate endeavor to convince the slow witted official concerning his own respectability and his friendship for the derelict; but whether a hazy recognition on the part of said derelict, or whether the more convincing argument of gold was used in coaxing the man to abandon the same, it would not do to state in this just age. It is sufficient to say that Kilman succeeded in persuading him into, and otherwise inducing a condition of administrative blinkingness, so that he might be permitted to take upon himself the further responsibility of bringing the abandoned wreck into some safe harbor.

It was something of a task indeed, for Paul was in no way sobered by the encounter, and the ice was proving to be a no inconsiderate addition

to the difficulty. But Kilman had conceived an idea which was prompting him to a great length of exertion. Mr. Hood's particular abode lay in that immediate vicinity, and his notion was to bear his burden to his friend's door and there leave it properly ticketed, as a slight memento for past favors. With much labor Kilman strove to carry out his purpose.

Now it happened that, at that late hour, Mr. Hood was calmly sleeping the sleep of those who have none too sensitive nerves, and whose consciences are not too exacting in their requirements. If he dreamed at all it was the quiet sort, born of good health and reasonable fatigue, that leaves no record on the memory. But, all at once, mysterious noises and weird, indistinct forms began to invade the unutterable solitudes of his intellect, and with their coming he turned several times upon his couch in a state of great unrest, while his breath, measured at first, commenced to come in short irregular gasps. Whr-r-r, bang ; whr-r-r-r, bang. The Devil was beating a tattoo upon his cranium as upon a drum ; now his cerebral shell had been converted into a lyre, and a boarding-school miss was drawing forth immeasurable agony through a spigot ; and now that same shell was entertaining a terrific con-

flagration and the engines were rushing about it from end to end, and playing huge torrents of oil upon the flames.

Bang !

“ Who’s there ?”

“ The Czar of Russia, open the door.”

Bang !

A table was upset, some pieces of bric-a-brac were broken, a chair was smashed, several bruises were incurred, and the gas was lit. Finally the door was reached and its numerous bolts undone ; when it was opened, a dark form rolled heavily backwards into the room. Without, the sound of hurrying feet was fast dying away along the corridor.

There he lay upon the floor in a shapeless heap, the merest semblance of a man. All further interest in life was gone, for the cold and rain had so benumbed and befogged him that he had not a sensation left ; and his very sudden and unceremonious appearance had a most befogging effect upon Mr. Hood as well. It was the brother of his bosom friend, and in time, a confused idea as to this one’s identity came to the vexed mind of the room’s occupant ; at the same time becoming cognizant of Paul’s very much saturated and stupefied condition, he

quickly perceived that there was no alternative but to remove the wet clothing and otherwise administer to the man's needs, and then, like a good Samaritan, to resign his own bed to him for the remainder of the night.

Clothed in one of Hood's most particular night robes, seated before the fire, the genial warmth soon penetrated the garment's ample folds, and Paul began to resolve into a state of semi-lucidity. Hood had made several efforts to get Paul into bed, but the latter had resisted him each time, seeming to have a decided inclination to remain before the fire, and as he began gradually to come to, Hood left him at last and went and threw himself into the corner of his sofa.

"Hood, I'm a ruined man."

Paul seemed to take it as a matter of course his being in Hood's room, and showed no disposition to question as to how he happened to come there. It was the first complete sentence that he had uttered since his arrival there.

"Are you cleaned out?" Hood was very much of the same opinion; he had been expecting something of the sort for some time.

"I'm a bad man, a very bad man; but there are other people worse than I am."

"Ah!" Hood did not concur in this, whatever may have been his inward belief.

"I am going to kill myself."

"No!" Hood secretly believed that it was the best thing he could do, but he was shocked none the less.

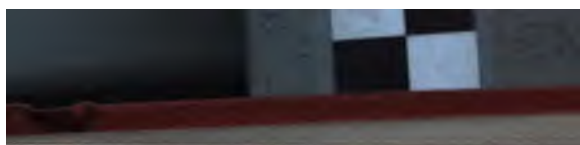
"Yes,—all so very wicked—no use trying to stand the disgusting ways of this world—no room for me here."

"How now? What is the trouble?"

"Money all gone;—police going to shut me up because I tried to sell my own furniture. Governor's gone against me, too. Was there ever such wickedness before? Wish they'd hung me for that last scrape. Might as well have done so."

"Well, if I had only known—the police were quite anxious—I am sorry I worked so hard to have you set free."

"You are a dear good fellow, anyway; comfort to know there's one such to be found. I'll tell you; I sold everything that I owned in the world to a Jew last week and spent all the money. I must have been drinking and have forgotten all about it, for yesterday I went and sold it to another Jew. But just as I had pocketed the money and was about to leave, Jew number



one turned up ; and then there was so much pleasantness emitted, and so many cries for police, that I had to give up the money just to quiet them. I got away as soon as I could, glad to be rid of the whole business ; well, and then I went and got something to steady my nerves, and nothing to pay for it with ; going to leave my waistcoat as security when 'nother fellow, who must have been drunk, settled the bill for me. But what is the use of going on this way any longer ; the best thing I can do is to put an end to myself. Can't you suggest some way of getting rid of this too sordid flesh ?”

“I would suggest, in all seriousness, that you get rid of your inebriety first, else you might find occasion to repent so rash an act after it was too late.”

“I'm not intoxicated ; may have been a while ago ; you are intoxicated yourself to say such a thing. Only despondent now—despondent because I find the world so bad ; want to get out bad company ; that's the reason, don't you know.”

“You'd better get into bed and think it over. To-morrow you may change your mind.”

“No, no ; couldn't think of such a thing ; only came say good-by and tell where's going ; go away soon, and then you must write Governor

and say where've gone. By Jove! there's window; guess I'll jump out; wonder whether it's high enough to accomplish great end."

Paul rose to his feet and proceeded unsteadily towards the window; whether or no he would have done anything more than look out is doubtful; but Hood did not propose to give him the opportunity and undertook to draw his attention from this dangerous point by assuring him that he would strike upon a glass skylight over a cook-shop below and in all probability interrupt the slumbers of a very pugnacious Frenchman; running a great risk thereby of simply mutilating himself. Paul, however, was inclined to be aggressive, for he had reached that second stage where depression sets in and brutality follows joviality; and Hood found it needful to take up a firm position upon the window-sill and thus hold him in check. Only by opening the window and himself braving the cold and rain that came rushing in, could he make the man go back to his seat before the fire.

Hood had hoped and expected that he could get Paul to bed in time, but this he found quite impossible, for Paul seemed to have taken a prejudice against anything of the sort. He did not show any disposition to take his departure,



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however, although he kept announcing his intention of doing the same every few minutes. Moreover, he did not appear to grow sleepy as might have been supposed ; on the contrary a condition of extreme wakefulness had set in, and he talked incessantly without seeming to grow weary in the least. Hood finally concluded to pay no further attention to him, and went and lay down upon the bed in the hope of gaining a little sleep himself. But if he sank into a dose every little sound would wake him ; in fact it was altogether impossible to more than doze, for, if Paul had any silent spells, they were quickly followed by periods of renewed loquacity. They were long and dreary hours that passed as Hood lay upon his bed and listened, trying to sleep, yet growing more wakeful as the time went by. Now and then the man would laugh and weep, and now he would be seized with some terrible dread, as his fancies took new shape, and groan aloud. He had tried not to believe it at first, but gradually he began to realize that Paul was fast growing delirious ; and he was on the point of rising and going in search of help, for his incoherent muttering warned him that some desperate act was likely to be attempted at any moment. All at once Paul sprang to his feet,

and with a most demoniacal yell, made a dash for the window. Fortunately Hood was on the alert and caught him in his arms just as he had gotten the sash half opened.

It was a maniac he had to deal with now, that had a maniac's fearful strength. Madly Paul struggled in the other's grasp to free himself, for the constraint angered him, and firmly as he was held, he succeeded in loosening one arm, when instantly he caught Hood by the throat. Compelled to change his hold, Hood seized him by the wrists ; but strong as he was, Paul threw him off and sprang at his throat again. Then began a terrible conflict, for the one had but the single desire—to strike to destroy ; and the other, unassisted, wishing to save this man, could but defend himself.

Over chair, over table, rolling upon the floor, now one on top, now the other ; each one to gain the mastery—with crash after crash resounding through the room, till it would seem as if the whole neighborhood must be aroused. Perceiving it was a question of endurance whether he saved himself or not, with a desperate effort Hood contrived to tear himself from the other's grasp, in the hope of gaining the door and calling for help. He sprang away and quickly drew a



table between them, but Paul, quicker than he, seized a chair and might have brained him had not Hood craftily dropped upon the floor, and, in the dim light, crept away, leaving the crazed man to exhaust himself in battering the table to pieces.

Paul was between him and the door now, and there was no other means of getting from the room, so after pausing for a moment to gain his breath, he stole up behind him and seizing him by the shoulders, dragged him across the floor, and flung him upon the bed before he had time to resist. Paul's strength was somewhat expended, and Hood was able to hold him although he still struggled furiously.

The other tenants of the building had been roused from their slumbers by the noise, for voices could be heard plainly in the corridor without. Presently some one began knocking on the door, but the door was fastened and Hood dared not let go his hold to open it, lest Paul should do more violence. No one, however, seemed disposed to interfere to the extent of breaking down the door, and, as Paul gradually grew quiet, the voices ceased without. At last Hood, believing that he might leave him now for a moment, started to go for some assistance. As

he passed out of his room, he met the concierge hurrying along the corridor with a candle in his hand, and then an explanation followed on the part of both. Soon a doctor was called in, and quieting remedies were given to the delirious Paul.

It was the winding up of Paul's Parisian affairs, and it came near to concluding his career in this world as well. There were many days of anxious watching at the bedside of this unfortunate man, when his life hung by the merest thread, and when any oversight on the part of his attendants must have resulted fatally. Hood, without the slightest hesitancy, surrendered his own room, and secured for himself less commodious quarters ; but for a week after Paul's coming he did not go beyond call. Day and night he tended him, not daring to trust this man's life in the charge of the nurses which he had procured. Only when he felt that Paul was out of danger did he take his customary rest.

From Paul's ravings during his delirium, from what he afterwards confessed—and Paul always from a boy had been all tears, repentance, and confessions, coupled with intermittent badness—Hood learned of many things that woke more or less feeling of repentance in his own sympathetic

bosom. In short, for the three years and more that Paul had been spending in Europe he had been engaged principally in bringing grist to the mill of human joys, and now he came through it himself, leaving his last sou behind him. He had squandered his entire fortune and had not a possession in the world remaining to him, save the very sad conditioned clothes that he had worn on his arrival there. Hood was not desirous of incurring any greater expenses in that quarter than were absolutely necessary, and he was well aware that Paul stood but little chance of gaining any further advances from his own home. He was not of a too trustful nature, so as soon as Paul had recovered sufficiently to be able to travel, Hood secured him a passage on one of the steamers bound for the United States ; and in order that he should not forestall the same, saw him safely on board, and remained with him up to the moment of sailing. Thus Hood was safely rid of one vexation that had clung to him for many weeks, that, for several months, had been with him in the contemplation of what seemed sure to follow. Certainly Hood felt a deep sense of relief when, very cheerfully, he waved his hand to Paul as the steamer in which he had embarked glided away upon the stream.

CHAPTER V.

AT ANCHOR.

Through the winter that followed Hood resided for the greater part of the time in Paris, only going to Scotland at Christmas to spend the holidays with a distant relative, to whom his father had been much attached, and to Holland during March to meet an old acquaintance who had come across the water on some business transaction of importance. The truth was, Hood had gotten into a rut, and, although in every letter which he sent to George, he gave him the assurance of his speedy return to America, month after month came and went, and the prospect of his ever returning seemed, day by day, more and more to become dependent upon his being hurled thither in some terrestrial convulsion, or other equally unexpected contingent of a like nature.

Hood was a man with but few wants and a good digestion—as has already been inferred without doubt—and, in consequence, discontent was a



rare experience with him. Had his condition been less of independence, or had he been brought suddenly to a state of insolvency, his spirits would have suffered but little depression. His life in Paris pleased him, but he was always satisfied with his life wherever located ; in the city of his birth he would have been quite as happy—even more so perhaps—for there, certainly, he would have been near his one friend, the being with whom so much added to his contentment.

After his return to Paris, when George had left him to go back to his home, Hood's life was of a very different sort from that of the first three years of his sojourn there—much quieter, more indolent, in truth, more correct, yet approaching dangerously near the verge of stagnation. One place he had in particular where he could betake himself and always meet persons more or less of a kindred nature, all coming together with the one purpose in view, to fill up the gaps in the time most easily. And here the greater number of his evenings were spent ; for Hood was not a ladies' man, and had no fondness for society, so-called ; only taking so much of it as was unavoidably forced upon him ; never seeking

it—which, indeed, was quite unnecessary for a man of his means and good standing.

The man who invented cards was inspired by a higher power to save humanity from the Devil, and the Devil to circumvent this move invented gambling. (There may seem to be a slight anachronism here, but season the aphorism with the conventional grain of salt and let it pass for what it is worth.) It was the one vice that Hood permitted himself in these days of reformation, but it was of a mild and harmless sort, that, if it brought him no benefit, brought him no serious loss, unless it was of time; for he fortunately possessed enough native stubbornness to hold himself within bounds, after having formed such a resolve,—the same having risen from the ruins of past experience. Sometimes in these evenings Hood played for small stakes; sometimes he dropped into the reading-room belonging to the place of meeting and lost himself in the perusal of a particular essay or the like; sometimes he joined a congenial spirit in a corner and entered into a discussion of one kind or another; sometimes, in another mood, he would seat himself amongst a group of different spirits and listen idly to their chatter.

His days had a great sameness about them.

The mornings were spent largely in adjusting his affairs, writing letters, going over accounts, making small purchases, considering any little matter that came along. The afternoons brought promenades on the Boulevard, or occasional canters on a favorite hunter about the faubourgh, or other recreations. Thus the days went by.

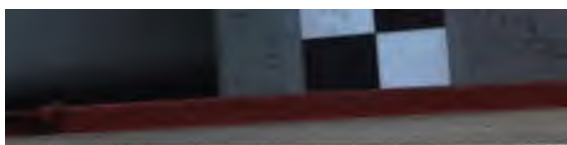
One circumstance had come to pass, however, which was the cause of an occasional break in the monotony of his existence. During that winter, on Sunday afternoons, Hood would absent himself from the vain world in which he was passing away his life, and not one of his acquaintances knew into what secret corner he took himself, or what the particular attraction or distraction was. At first his non-attendance at his usual haunts occurred only now and then, but gradually it grew into a serious weekly matter of course, until those most intimate with him, who knew his ways so well—or thought they did—began to have wise looks and significant smiles whenever they happened to refer to him on these occasions.

With Hood it was like the stepping from one sphere into another, like the casting aside of an existence and taking up a new one—a brief glimmer of rose-tinted light, such as his faculties

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never before had received impression of. For the first time in the man's life he gained an insight into a quiet home existence ; an existence where friendships came from affinity, not necessity, where all was disinterested love and kindness, where no wearisome visitations seemed to find a place.

In a shady corner of an unimportant square in the outskirts of the city, Doctor Hillern, with his daughter to keep charge of the house, had taken up his abode ; and here Hood gradually fell into the way of coming ; for the reposeful, intellectual life which these two led was far more in keeping with his taste than the vacant, idle existence that the fates had fore-ordained for him. Besides, the dainty little teas which Maude superintended appealed to him strongly,—and Hood was very approachable on this point,—they reminded him of his boyhood, for the dishes for the most part were American and served in an American fashion. It was Maude's fancy to bring in American ideas and practices into her nomadic life, as if the instinct had been inherited from her American mother ; but the skillful and economic way in which she managed the house-keeping, and the artistic arrangement of every



detail about the furnishing of each room was French decidedly.

After their return to Paris the doctor's health had changed for the better, and during that fall, whenever the weather was warm enough, it was his pleasure to sit out upon the porch of an afternoon and read and study, or perhaps chat with a neighbor passing by; or, if he happened to be in the mood, even to play with his neighbors' children, and whittle out bowie knives for them, and other articles of barbarian warfare.

It might have been a month after George's departure—it was a considerable lapse of time—that Hood, for the first time since then, had found himself, one Sunday afternoon, strolling out in the direction of this particular square. He wanted to take a walk he had said to himself,—he hated to set out walking without some end in view,—and here was an excellent opportunity for covering some five or six good miles of space by a street that led through a quaint and picturesque part of the city, with which he was not familiar, and at the end,—well, an opportunity to rest himself, and if he chose, to sup and pass the evening in company that did not bore him. So the habit had been begun; but with the coming of the winter months and the incumbent bad

weather, he found himself compelled to forego the excuse of walking, and thereupon he discovered a fondness for a particular dietary production of Miss Maude's, which was not to be found elsewhere. Not very frequently he came through the winter season, only often enough to keep up the acquaintanceship so accidentally begun; but as the lengthening days of spring grew warm and bright, and balmy breezes came floating northward from the land of sunshine and flowers, when the lilacs were in bloom and the returning birds busying themselves tunefully amidst the leafing branches of the trees, then he saw, more often, an occasion to set out of an afternoon to pay a visit to this congenial household.

It contented Hood, if the day were fine, to saunter up their quiet street and, dropping into the little neatly kept yard, to bid a hearty good-day to the old doctor, whom he was almost certain of finding seated upon the porch. Here he was happy to seat himself and offer an idea or two, or give his ear to the doctor's very entertaining conversation; and if Miss Maude would come out and join them, in the sunshine of her fair presence, his satisfaction would be complete.

Hood could be an attentive and intelligent

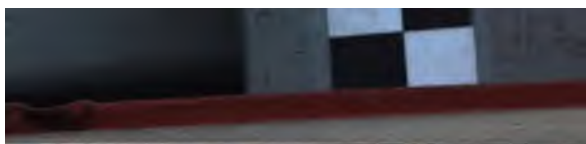
listener when it suited him, and the popularity he gained with the doctor may have been, in a measure, due to this cause ; for the latter had gathered out of his own experiences a goodly store of entertaining facts and deductions, and was never more pleased than when he found an appreciative soil to sow them in. Possibly it was Hood's thirst for knowledge that made him come—he had a thirst for knowledge, though it was neither intense nor burning, and if he preferred getting his facts and deductions all cut and dried to gathering and preparing them himself, that is neither here nor there—or possibly it was from some other cause. Anyway, he showed an increasing inclination to repeat this experience of listening, though it must be admitted that, owing to the doctor's most prolific mind, such would now and then produce a sense of fullness even to the most empty ; so much so that sometimes, fearing for her friends, Maude would resort to subterfuge in order to turn the very vigorous current of his imagination into other channels.

One evening in June, Hood was sitting on the porch with the doctor ; he had just returned from a short run over to London, and was relating some of the incidents of the journey to the latter.

Maude was within, and they could hear her giving some directions to the maid-of-all-work ; but presently she came out of the house and, passing to her father's side, half reclining upon the arm of his easy chair, she put her arms about his neck and began to stroke his long and flowing silver locks. She listened to their conversation for a time, and then she rose and, going to the edge of the portico, turned partly from them to watch the setting sun as its rays fell purpling through the thin mist that hovered over the great city. The sun shone directly upon her there, bathing in its tempered beams her lithe and graceful form. With eyes fixed pensively upon the western sky, she wore a strangely serious look, and as Hood watched her thus, he detected lines of anxious care upon her beautiful countenance.

She descended to the walk presently and commenced to pull up some chick-weed that had strayed into her flower-bed in the yard. She plucked some verbenas from their stalks and then, playing with them in her hand, she passed down the walk to the gate, and here she paused and looked wistfully down the street. Hood could but rise to his feet at this and join her there.

“ We will be away but a short time, father,”



Maude called back to her parent a moment later, and then the two passed out of the yard and walked slowly up the street together.

It was more country than city where the house was situated ; the street was laid out regularly and bordered with great old trees, but it was not paved, only curbed with a narrow asphalt walk on one side that soon lost itself in an open country road. On the opposite side lay a reach of land, used for pasturing cows, partly cut up into lots, with a slight indication here and there that a street would be run through it ; a huge placard was to be seen here, announcing that its owner had a willingness to sell ; but its time-worn appearance seemed to belie the truth of its statement, or else to indicate an indisposition on the part of the public to avail themselves of the privilege. Skirting this plot, a dilapidated fence led far away, following the line of the street, here and there disappearing beneath a mass of rank shrubbery, now coming to an abrupt termination and then beginning again further on.

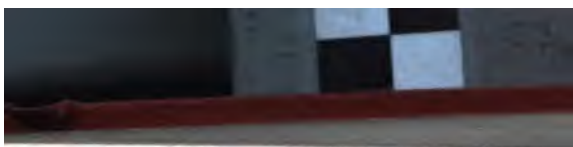
They followed along the stone sidewalk together till they came to its end, and then they pursued their way out upon the open road ; they reached the top of a gentle slope of ground, where some pines and myrtles were clustering together,

and here Maude sat down upon a fallen tree and Hood threw himself at her feet upon the soft and fragrant earth.

The sun had hidden itself behind the horizon now, but the western sky was still aglow with the last rays of the departing day ; darkness was gathering in all the hollows and silently stealing forth over the languid earth, gradually rising on high and calling forth, one by one, the starry hosts of heaven. In the valley beneath, the spires of the city rose stately and solemn through the mist and smoke, their tall outlines standing darkly against the fast darkening sky ; and the roof tops, fringed here and there by patches of thick foliage, stretched far and near in huge irregular masses, looking for all like a vast petrified sea. It was a scene most impressive, and the blasé man and this ingenuous young woman sat together long without speaking, watching, spell-bound, night's silent, solemn fall.

“ It is a great cruel city, yet how peaceful and harmless it seems.”

“ So harmless indeed that you can imagine almost that you hear its dissimulating purr—a huge nine-lived monster with innumerable paws which it is ever putting forth to gather in the innocent fancies for its insatiable digestion.”



"In that great ventricle how much that is pure and beautiful is swallowed up. Yet is the monster very different from the man on which it feeds?"

"This question of diet at times comes seriously in conflict with the sensibilities; the conscience is quite upset by it at times. I am glad to find that you do confess to misanthropy, just a little bit."

"Not so; by the disintegration and re-arrangement of many atoms far more beautiful creations may be produced."

"Quite true, Miss Maude. The robin, off which the cat makes a meal, without doubt comes to be an important factor in the sleekness of the cat's coat—and a sleek and well-dined cat is an earthly product fair to look upon. After all you are an optimist, I see."

"And you are one of those pessimistic iceberg bores, that are forever drifting down out of the polar sea of apathy and causing fogs in the open ocean, so cold and impenetrable that every pursuing ship of thought must get out of its bearings and be wrecked. Now don't answer me; I don't want to hear what you are going to say; for I know it will be no more in keeping with the idea, than is the malaria with this beautiful evening,

stealing forth from yonder morass to make the fairest moments all a delusion and a mockery."

"I could a tale unfold about a lean and hungry animalcule."

"Hush ! do not disobey me !"

"Silence is golden ; henceforward I will be silent that the metallic worth may win me back into your favor."

"You grow presumptuous, silly man. Some moths there may be not to be caught by glitter."

"Pardon me, Miss Maude, I—I—you have misinterpreted my words—you put me in an awkward position—such was farthest from my thoughts."

"That was what I supposed ; I should not have spoken so had I not felt confident that you did not intend to propose to me."

Maude gave a little silvery laugh.

"That—that—you make me feel more awkward than ever. I did not mean—"

"Now do not spoil it all. I thought that in you I had one friend in whom I might feel confidence. But alas, I fear not ! Men are all alike ; it is either matrimony or indifference. If there is interest enough felt in conversation at all, then they cannot converse to any great length without touching upon the topic—or if not, then it is



icebergs and bores. I had great hopes, but all is vanity I find. No use, no use, my idols all are turned to clay !”

“Are you prepared to entertain a proposition of marriage at the present moment ?”

“From you, do you mean ? or from any man taken at random from the world, who might venture to come forward with the proposal ?”

“From the random being, of course,” Hood said. “An iceberg would scarce dare to venture in such a warm and sunny neighborhood.”

Had she answered him otherwise, there is no telling what his reply might have been.

“Well, now, since you are so good as to generalize, let me see : you ask me if I am prepared—to be prepared must imply expectation, and expectation with a woman means presumption ; presumption in a woman is an unseemly act. You ask me to make confession of that which must give you an insight into my fortress—I can only answer that if there is any weakness it would be folly to betray it ; if there is strength, then it may still be to my advantage to conceal the fact.”

“If you will generalize yourself, I shall be pleased. Take matrimony, as viewed from a feminine standpoint : why does a woman accept

or refuse a man who offers himself for her consideration ?”

“There are certain attributes which are necessary. To begin with, let us take the occasion of their first seeing each other. He notices her for the first time, perhaps it is on the street, or maybe it is in a ball-room, or anywhere else ; he contrives to get introduced to her ; then she notices him for the first time, and decides whether he is good looking or otherwise ; sees if his hair is well cared for and his mustache full fledged ; makes a note in her mind as to the spotlessness of his linen and his character ; whether his clothes are made by a tailor and fit him or not ; whether he smells of tobacco or cologne, or both ; whether he is gawky or graceful ; which being done, she examines the shape of his head and falls to wondering what is inside of it ; then she descends a scale lower in the catalogue and begins to consider what are his qualifications for the office,—whether he has property, or propertied parents, or capabilities that are marketable ; this is her most important consideration, for matrimony you know, involves great responsibilities, and she must see a fair prospect of being suitably cared for ; after which she tries to decide if it will be agreeable, or bearable, or annoying to have him

on her hands. She tolerates his silly speeches and bothersome attentions in inverse ratio to her regard, and, should he make bold enough to offer himself, having considered all these things, without rhyme or reason, she will throw herself into his arms, or say no, just as the fancy may happen to take her. There ; I have made a frank confession to you regarding my own sex, and I hope you may be benefited accordingly."

"And are you one of these calculating yet uncalculating creatures, Miss Maude? I had always thought of you as something different from the ordinary run of women."

"You would not have me an unwomanly woman would you? one of those so-called strong minded creatures that are such a mockery to the sex?"

"I would not have you in any way different from what you are ; I never could like you were you otherwise."

"You do like me a little, then?"

"I would that you cared for me as much."

"I like you ; for you have been a true friend to me. You make me feel secure in myself for the reason that you cause me to have confidence in you ; with you I do not have that feeling of mistrust that other men bring."

"Oh, like you, like you, like you ! what deep sorrow do those words conceal !"

With her last words Hood rose to his feet and walked away murmuring to himself. As he stood several paces from her, watching the starlit sky and the brightly lighted city beneath, his face seemed strangely pinched and wan. But he remained thus only a moment ; presently he returned to her side.

"You will always regard me as your friend," he said, with a smile, "no matter how time may separate us?"

And she answered, "I shall always think of you as the truest friend that I have ever had."

CHAPTER VI.

THE TIDE OF DESTINY FLOWS ON.

Hood went to St. Petersburg that summer, by way of a new experience. A friend had invited Hood to accompany him on a trip thither, and the idea had immediately taken his fancy. They spent a month together exploring the imperial city, they contrived to make acquaintance with some of the high functionaries of that great empire's government, and they unearthed some hidden facts concerning the true inwardness of the same. They had planned going into Siberia and were on the point of setting out, but some Governmental disturbance occurring at the time, it was deemed unadvisable, so the expedition was abandoned.

They grew tired of each other's company at last and decided to separate. The friend dropped out of sight, and Hood, one morning, went on board a steamer that plied the Baltic, en route for nowhere in particular. How Hood spent the remainder of the summer, whether cruising on unknown waters, making friends with the skip-

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pers of fishing smacks, searching for strange and wild experience, or whether roughing it on land in the most approved Bohemian fashion, he has never made known to any of his friends. Certain is it that his bronzed and weather-beaten appearance, upon his return to the world, indicated a life spent mostly in the open air.

During the summer Maude Hillern received two letters from him. The first bore the post-mark Stockholm, but in the heading of the epistle was some unspellable name of which the J's and G's alone were decipherable. It was wholly a descriptive letter that told of wild scenes and extravagant adventures, and which made few allusions to the writer himself. The second was similar in kind, but was dated from an unheard-of place, which Maude found upon the map, after much search, to be located in the northern part of Norway.

Maude had sent him two letters in return, directing them to his address in Paris, as he had suggested; but never imagining that he would receive them within any reasonable length of time. Her first told of the quiet life she was leading with her father; no doubt, perhaps, mentioned a little excursion into the country for the day; in all probability described, with strongly

humorous portrayal, some boorish clown who had persisted in showing her attentions; may have depicted the endeavors of some more designing admirer; possibly made some mention about the times gliding swiftly by in spite of her uneventful existence. The second letter was written in a much more serious vein. Her father had had another relapse, and, though recovering his strength in a measure, there was now no hope that he could last many months longer. There was a despairing ring to the tone of this letter that revealed more than words could tell. She was in the deepest grief; not because her father's end was nearing, for she believed there was rest in the grave, and he had suffered through his latest illness the utmost agony and prayed for the death so near at hand, but because he was to be taken from her. He had been all in all to her, strangely woven together as their lives had been; she had known no other affections, no other happiness; he had been her life, and to lose him was to lose everything.

This letter did not reach the person to whom it was sent until after his return to Paris. It had followed Hood from place to place in his wanderings, and had come back to the city before him after all; he found it, together with a num-

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ber of others that had accumulated at his banker's, awaiting his return, but it was the first to be opened by him, and after he had read it, he noticed with no little concern that more than a month had elapsed since the writing thereof. Now, although this young lady and her father had dwelt much in his thoughts during his return journey, and he had been most anxious to hear how they were getting on, he had determined to linger in the city a few days before going out to see them ; but this letter decided him otherwise, and that same afternoon he took the train, very much disturbed in mind, for he knew not what misfortune might have befallen them.

It was early October, and the wind blew fresh and brisk as he hurried along the street which he had come to know so well during that last year. He had gone over the whole list of possible happenings, and every conceivable casualty he had pictured in his mind as having occurred. What if her father had died during his absence and she gone away he knew not where ? Perhaps lost in the great maelstrom so near at hand, in which they might pass their lives and never once meet. People seemed to notice him as they passed him by, as if they thought it his presence there queer. He felt a

sudden sinking of the heart when he drew near the house.

It was still occupied, but no one was in sight ; he opened the gate and walked into the yard. All looked well, he thought. He went to the door and rang the bell. The same maid-of-all-work came in response, and he was relieved to see her face. Yes, Miss Maude was at home, and in good health, but the doctor was very unwell. Maude came to him in a moment, giving a soft cry of pleasure as she perceived him standing in their little parlor.

"I am so glad you have come ; where have you been ?"

It gave him a thrill of pain to see how thin and pale she had grown. "Nowhere, a non-existence, a mere ceasing to be." He could not say for the life of him, he had not a recollection, a comatose state, possibly. How was her father ?

Maude's face fell, the tears stole into her eyes, she strove to suppress a sob. "There is no hope, he can last but a short time longer, I am in despair."

As this young woman stood before him, worn out with nursing her parent, sadly wasted, almost an invalid herself, Hood saw how she was kept up by her will alone,—saw how near the

end was, and what a black gulf yawned before her, through which she must grope her way henceforward by herself,—saw the many dangers that must beset her path, and, thinking of her sweet and trustful nature, trembled for her future.

But he had come at a timely moment ; something had just happened and she wanted to talk with him. Her father was sleeping and she might leave him for a few moments ; she had not been away from the house for several weeks ; would he take a short walk with her ?

They walked out upon the street and into the wood together. It was a clear, warm day, and the sun was shedding a mellow light through the shorn branches of the trees ; here and there were copses where a few dry and yellow leaves still clung, rattling dismally as the wind stirred gently through the wood. On a tall tree some mistletoe had climbed high up, and hidden in it were some magpies' nests ; they could hear the noisy screaming of the birds as they walked along, and sometimes the tapping of beaks upon the wood, that sounded amidst the trees like the strokes of a woodman's ax. The ground was wet with recent rains, and the moisture from the dead leaves quickly penetrated their shoes ; in many places there were puddles sometimes

entirely concealed by the yellow carpeting, and they had to proceed cautiously. Maude soon grew fatigued, and presently they sat down together upon a fallen tree.

"I ought not to speak with you of this, but to whom else can I go. It is so desirable that my father's remaining hours shall not be disturbed by any worldly affairs, and yet it seems as if he is to be sorely afflicted at the last moment."

"What has occurred?"

"You see I know nothing of money matters; he has always discouraged me in that regard; only this I know, that his business affairs are sadly tangled, and I can see no longer any means of securing for him such things as are necessary for his comfort. So long as my father had his health he could maintain himself comfortably by the practice of his profession; but he spent money as easily as he made it, and during the last few years he has only practised when he found it necessary to replenish his store. He always had kept, uninvested in the bank, a considerable sum of money, which he called an emergency fund, but when he was taken sick, this sum—in order to secure a larger income, I fancy—he put into some shares which have payed large dividends,

but which had little real value doubtless ; and these I very much suspect are now worthless."

"And your father has no other resources ? he has made no provision for you in case of his death ?"

"He always intended this sum for me, I suppose ; but that is not the question. I can contrive to maintain myself by some means or other ; there are always ways for a woman to get along if she has a mind to. The trouble is how to keep up the house so long as he may live ; and I see no way, for our account is overdrawn at the bank, and the tradesmen are growing clamorous for a settlement of their bills. There are a few trinkets which belonged to my mother, but they can only ward off the inevitable for a short while ; in the end we will have to move to some cheap apartment in the city ; and to move him must surely hasten his death. Oh, why are these calamities hurried all into a moment ? as if the fates made haste because my father's days are numbered."

"Maude, set your mind at rest on this point. Your father must not be disturbed ; his remaining hours shall pass away as peacefully as have the last years of his life. I will see what I can do to straighten out his affairs, and till then you

may call upon me for such assistance as your father may need."

"You? I had never thought of you. You are rich. I have heard you complain about the burden of your wealth. I have no head for such matters, I know, no more than my father has. But it would be wrong. I have forgotten myself. My father would never permit such a thing. No, no, no; I must not think of it, it is impossible."

"You surely do not mistrust the sincerity of my motive, Maude?"

"Not so, truly. Yet we cannot accept assistance of this kind from a person upon whom we have no claims of any sort whatever."

"But the moment is a critical one; the least trouble of any sort must hasten your father's death; besides you yourself are quite worn out with caring for him. You will have to accept aid from some source or other, or else perish of hunger and cold."

"We are objects of charity; then let the state look after us. It is more fitting."

"Nay, Maude, do not let your extreme sensitiveness redound to the injury of your father and yourself as well. I appreciate your feeling fully, but remembering the friendly relationship that has existed between your father and myself since

our becoming acquainted, I cannot help but regard it as my right to make his last moments comfortable, to the best of my ability, as I know he would do towards me were our situations reversed."

Hood was prompted to speak thus from disinterested friendship, she knew too well, but Maude could not help feeling hurt none the less. It is the seraphs who despair when Mammon tunes his lyre; the thought of pecuniary aid was harsh discordance to her sensitive nature, and in the overwrought condition to which anxiety had brought her, she lost her self-control. The tears welled into her eyes; she buried her face in her hands and sobbed faintly once or twice; she could only murmur no, no, no. To Hood it seemed like the moaning of a lost spirit in another world, and too keenly he felt how wide was the gulf that separated them. He was tempted to throw himself upon his knees before her and pour out his soul as in one reckless cast of the die—to tell her what a deep hold she had gained upon his heart, and how he could never think of another as of her, how gladly he would lay down his life for her and ask for no more reward than one sweet smile. But he restrained himself, feeling such to be the basest cruelty at a

time like that ; he would not tempt her, for he knew full well that even could he win, her, she would come to him from gratitude not love, and he hesitated lest she might not be able to determine her own true feelings for herself.

She could not remain away long, so presently they started to return, taking the short path that led across the open field to the rear of their yard ; and hurrying along they soon reached home. They entered the house by the kitchen, for Maude was anxious to go to her father as soon as possible ; the servant was there preparing the dinner. She had just left the doctor, she said ; he had awakened but a few moments before, apparently very much refreshed by his sleep, and was now reading the newspaper, which he had requested her to bring him. They ascended the narrow stairway, and Maude motioned him to remain in the parlor while she went to the little side room on the same floor, which her father occupied.

Hood had scarcely turned to look about him when he heard a suppressed cry ; running across the hall to the bed-chamber, he perceived the doctor's form lying prone upon the floor, while Maude was on her knees beside him, clasping his neck, calling him by name, weeping bitterly.

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Hood went to her quickly, and, kneeling by her side, felt of the old man's temples.

"He is dead, O God !" she exclaimed. "And I am cursed for leaving him."

He turned the doctor upon his back and opened his clothing about the throat ; the body was still warm but his heart had ceased to beat. "Your father is at rest, my child." He took the dead man in his arms and bore him across the room ; he laid him upon the bed and closed the eyes that were already becoming glazed. Maude still knelt upon the floor in the place where her father had fallen. She was mute and motionless now, she had ceased to weep ; paralyzed by the shock, she was as a dead thing. When he had done what he could for her father's remains, he turned to look about him. On the floor, in a crumpled heap, lay the newspaper which the girl had brought to him, and which must have fallen from his hands as he was struck down by his fatal malady. But why had he risen from his couch ? Hood picked up the paper and glanced hastily over its columns. Yes, there was told the story of the doctor's loss. He had read, and in his despair he had endeavored to go to his desk in order to write a letter. presumably ; the sudden

mental shock and the effort of walking had precipitated his death.

Hood lifted Maude up and led her to a chair ; but the movement roused her, and with a faint cry she ran to her father and, throwing herself upon the bed beside him, clasped her arms about his neck and began to moan pitifully. He went to the bedside and placed his hand upon her shoulder without speaking, and then she began to sob as if her heart would break. He was in despair and knew not what to do. Presently he left her and descending to the kitchen he directed the maid to go and call the wife of one of the neighbors, a kindly matron whom he had sometimes met there in the house. Then he returned to Maude and endeavored to console her as best he could.

They buried him in a little cemetery in the country, situated on the banks of a river beside which he had always loved to pass his leisure hours in days gone by. There had been a few mourners at the house ; one or two Americans, and several old patients of the doctor's who had admired him ; but no one followed him to the grave save his daughter and Hood and the kind-hearted neighbor who had responded to his call,

and had assisted them in preparing the body for burial.

Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust ; the funeral rites were performed and the last words spoken ; the soulless grave-diggers began to throw in the earth, and it fell with a cruel thud upon the coffin. Then they turned from the grave and walked silently away to the carriage that was awaiting them.

Some days later, early one afternoon, Hood came to the house. There was a bill upon it now, and as he entered at the gate and perceived it, the lines upon his forehead deepened.

"Ah !" he sighed, "the end has come at last. But where will she go now, poor helpless child ? What can she do all alone in this great wicked world ?"

Maude met him at the door ; she had been expecting him. She led him into the parlor and they sat down together.

"I will speak plainly to you, Maude, I will not try to conceal anything from you. To be brief, I have gone over your father's affairs during the last few days, thoroughly, and I find that nothing can be realized. The shares in which he had the whole of his property invested have

turned out to be worthless as you suspected ; you are left a penniless orphan."

He had dreaded to tell her this, for he had feared that the news, though expected, might prove a serious shock to her, coming at a time when she was exhausted by the trials she had undergone. But he had deemed it necessary ; and the calmness with which she received the information surprised him deeply.

"Well, it does not matter," she answered ; "I am young and strong, and for such people the world has always room ; no doubt I shall lead a more useful and a better life. My only regret is that my father's debts must go unpaid ; but these I can arrange in a measure ; some day, perhaps I can pay them all."

"Have you made any plans for the future, Maude?"

"I have not had time to think as yet. I remember going through one of the hospitals with my father once, and I thought then, I recollect, how a woman here could devote her life to a useful and honorable cause, one that is in keeping with her true nature, too."

"Maude, you could not think of that surely ; you were never intended for a dray horse ; such a life must crush out your young spirit, and

bring you to a premature old age. You have talents ; there are plenty of fields in which you can use them to your advantage."

"You mean music and art, I suppose. I tell you that the mediocrity which I, at best, could attain in these, tempts me far less than the pursuit of a calling in which I know that I can excel."

"Do not decide too hastily, Maude. Why do you not go to America? A woman has more opportunities to take care of herself there than here."

"To America? I had never thought of it! Why not? My mother came from there. But I am all alone in the world. I know not of a single relative to whom I may go, and it is a long way, and what can a poor, unprotected woman do by herself in a great city without resources of any sort?"

"Your situation is but little different here. You may have friends, but in your changed state you will find many doors closed that once opened gladly to your coming, and many cold looks where all was smiles before. Listen to me; I have a friend, an American lady, who is about to return to her home, and who, did she know your

story, would be glad to take you under her protection on her way."

"Oh, why are you so good to me, Mr. Hood? It grieves me deeply to think I can never return your kindness."

"It is not goodness, Maude. I assure you that I interest myself in you thus, merely because it gratifies me."

"What nonsense! Please do not be silly, for this is a serious moment to me."

"I am truly serious. You know I never should have come near you had it not pleased me; I fancy if there had been any sacrifice involved I should have retired from the field long ago."

"Hush!"

"You will go?"

She gave him an inquiring half-frightened look as if she would penetrate the deepest secrets in his bosom. Though she had travelled much, and seen human nature in its many different phases, in that sudden glance she read the truth, and felt a deeper confidence in him. She would not mistrust his motive.

"I should like to meet your friend," she answered.

"I understand your feelings, Maude; it would

be wrong to put your trust in one of whom you know so little. But when you are satisfied as to my sincerity, you will go?"

"You give me the deepest assurance of your friendship ; I cannot doubt your word. Yes ; it is as well. I will go."

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOURONDEENS.

The blood of the Bourondeens was undoubtedly of a very blue tint ; it had passed the ordeal of the social spectroscope through many successive generations, and in no instance had any yellow or green, or any other plebian strain, been reported in its spectrum. At least so goes common rumor ; and, indeed, if ever there had been any foreign admixture, it must have been of so mild a sort as immediately to become diffused without in any manner affecting the true color of the dye that was so strong and imperishable in its nature. There were threads of history treasured up in the family archives,—tangled to be sure, much the worse for wear, quite likely to crumble into dust before the light of day,—and in these the family prided itself much. One ancestor, it was said, had led a division at the battle of Waterloo, and had died like a hero upon the field ; one uncle, of numerous degrees of greatness, had followed Nelson—in what capacity seems to be a little vague ; another of the name had continued faith-

ful to a certain crowned head after his whole remaining retinue had suddenly turned mugwumps—to use the euphonious parlance of that day—and deserted their leader for more assuring prospects. But why enumerate them all? It is quite enough to say that the vicissitudes of fortune, in no recorded instance, had driven any one of its members to the sad necessity of cleaning pots in a king's kitchen, or to any other equally dishonorable proceeding; so that the surviving ones were able to shake hands with the highest without feeling the slightest trepidation.

William Bourondeen, the father of the surviving branch in this section, was a man who, in every respect, did credit to his pedigree. In his habits and dealings, correct to an extent that left no opening for aspersion, he was trusted thoroughly by all who knew him, and held up as a standard to be referred to in serious questions of casuistry. These decided traits in truth must have been inherited, for his presence on this side of the water was to be accounted for in the fact of an ancestor's too great zeal in a case where a matter of sentiment had come in conflict with the natural caution indispensable to self-preservation. Many of the rigid Puritan ideas he persisted in that call to mind the teachings of his mother,

sprung from good old New England stock ; but a man withal of considerable intelligence and foresight, his dominion was of prudence and good sense. Indulgent with his children to a degree almost of folly, none the less had he insisted on their carrying out his views in regard to a correct behavior, and they, loving him deeply, and having for him a high esteem, with few exceptions, had given him little cause for serious reproof.

Not so very far out beyond the city's limits in Westchester, lay the country seat of these scions of nobility ; and not so many years ago but what our grandfathers might be able to recall it, their possessions in acres had been of an extent that could have occupied days in a circumambulation of the same ; but gradually the number had dwindled away, until now it required but three figures to express the amount, and they meaning no very great sum at that. It was a beautiful bit of rolling country, dotted here and there with straggling villages, and now and then a group of farm buildings ; while at times a more pretentious mansion was to be made out, nestling amidst a clump of larches and elms. A thick wood, for the better part, covered this estate ; great trees were here in unassailed maturity and hiding, beneath their shades, tall cliffs and dark hollows ;

in one place lay hid a rocky glen, cool always in summer time, and well sheltered when the winter storms were bustling forth ; through it wound a little crystal stream, ever babbling amongst the rocks, busily flowing on as if anxious to mingle with the waters of the Sound that lay not far away.

It was early June and the woods and meadows were clad in the rich verdure of the new-born summer ; the perfume of blossoming flowers floated on the still air, and the birds amongst the branches, rejoicing in the approaching cares of parenthood, were filling the air with sweetest melody. About the farm-yards, barn-fowls cackled deepest satisfaction, conscious of duty well performed, and now the cock's shrill clarion proclaimed the hour, crowing fierce defiance from farm to neighboring farm. Noon time it was, and the sun upon the meridian shone brightly down out of the deep blue heavens ; in its happy beams all nature was beautiful.

A spacious pile, the ancestral mansion of the Bourondeens. From the ashes of old revolutionary times it had risen, unpretentiously at first, gradually increasing in size ; growing, with the sweep of time, out of the diminishing estates, until now only three of the original walls



remained, and they relegated to the undignified function of back kitchen—marking the site of a stirring incident of those times, a rocky eminence where once breast-works had been constructed and successively occupied by different divisions of the contending armies as their fortunes rose or waned ; with its battlements and modified turrets, commanding the country round, standing against an extensive grove, towering above the highest trees—for all it seemed like an ancient feudal castle replete with antiquity. It was the proudest figment thereabout.

Within a little extension belonging to this patrician abode, a sort of enclosed veranda adjoining the dining-room, the family of Bourondeen was assembled. That is, the weaker and more gentle part of it, for everything masculine that appertained, disappeared within the family coach every morning at fifteen minutes after eight, and, save for very few exceptions, was not again seen until dinner was served at six-thirty of the clock. Around the table the ladies were gathered, for it was that forbidden hour when feminine nature, by a mysterious inductive process, is supposed to draw out of the presence of much nectar and ambrosia, such inspiration as is needful to its

unsurpassable loveliness. It was luncheon, and prior to the occasion of a little garden party, the anticipation of which was exciting an unusual interest here ; for, though given according to a good old custom of the family about this time, on this particular occasion it was more especially in honor of Miss Maude Hillern affianced to George, the second son and the first of the children who had been brave enough to venture even thus near the borders of the alluring yet most discouraging matrimonial sea.

The family was in a flutter—this softer part of it ; two or three very intimate friends were already present, and in the room there was that incessant hum of voices which comes of any group of ladies, where important matters require their consideration. So be it ; the conversation was much what the most of us have heard when it has been our pleasure or our misfortune to become one of a company self-constituted for the purpose of considering the causes, why and whereof, and the possibilities and probabilities, etc., etc., pertaining to an act similar in kind, of some indiscreet friend of ours.

Anna had expressed her opinion to the company ; she had given it to numerous other companies, and separate individuals as well. Anna

was the oldest child, and as such it was her duty to see that the others made no mistakes. None of them had done so while under her tutelage ; it was all owing to that most unfortunate European trip, when she had not been with him to advise as to his choosing. True, the girl was well enough in herself, pretty and lovable and all that ; but then what right had he to engage himself to poverty—he with so much nobleness to oblige. The bare pittance that had been left to him by his grandfather would suffice to support them only in the humblest of ways, and then his law business was yielding him nothing as yet. No ; his duty to his family, his duty to himself, required that he should have chosen an heiress. There was no reason why he could not have fallen in love with a lady who had property ; certainly, plenty of talented and lovable girls having fortunes were to be found ; and in a country like this, where wealth was disseminated with each successive generation, the one who bore such a famous name as theirs needed to consider a question of this kind most seriously.

It was Cornelia, her younger sister, who had come to her one day and told her how George had confessed all, and how he was desirous that she should smooth the way for him with his parents

and sister. Thereupon Miss Anna, in despair, had gone straightway to her dearest friend and confidant, Kate Newborn, and, throwing herself upon that kind person's shoulders, had wept long, and between the tears, had whispered how, since she had first known her, she had resolved that George should be hers. True, Kate was some two or three years George's senior, but what were three years in the scale against such prospects as she offered.

As has been said already, Anna was the oldest child ; her début into this vulgar world had been made in a manner not unusual to the first born of aristocratic parents, and the event had been attended with the conventional number of eminent physicians, accoucheusés, and other appurtenances needful to noteworthy occurrences of the kind. As a result, either the young lady or the attendants had well nigh proved a serious hindrance to the firm establishment of the name through future ages ; indeed, her career came near ending as briefly as it had begun,—so the story goes,—and that must have made many differences in this world's affairs.

Anna herself had had many opportunities. The son of a wealthy brewer had once offered himself, —whether there was anything in the brew has

not been stated—but he was refused because such a connection would have been likely to hurt her brother's prospects. Another young man had also dared—well connected, to be sure—but then he showed an inclination to weak mindedness ; anyway, there were those horrid poverty wolves barking in the matrimonial jungle and she could never have brought herself to believing that the poor dear boy would ever be brave enough to keep them from the door. But what she always declared to have been her best offer was a certain high functionary, a man of world-wide reputation—his name, with true feminine discreetness, she refused to divulge, for it was entirely an affair of the heart, she held, and there were reasons why she should not entertain his proposal. On this point Master Freddy, then a fifteen-year-old, with the proverbial terribleness of small brothers, had undertaken to enlighten the family and the public as well by giving it as his belief that the person referred to was a distinguished relic of an international controversy which, in years gone by, had seriously perplexed a large portion of the civilized world.

There were others who had shed hopeful glances ; but one had been a Catholic and she was a most rigid Presbyterian ; and one had sympa-

thized with the Southern cause, which was in itself quite enough to make her pause and consider ; one had been most handsome, but here an unpleasant cast in one eye had kept her too much in a state of disagreeable uncertainty ; and one had been too old and another too ardent to inspire trust. Thus had she let her chances go by until now she was arrived at that age when the mere fact of a man's addressing his suit to her was sufficient in itself to make a woman doubt his motive.

But it was not because a suitable one had never come that she had chosen to remain thus singly blest. By no means this. Personal consideration with her always had been secondary—no ; there was, within her breast, too deep a sense of duty ; the family name needed for its preservation a most careful superintendence, and her poor mother confined to her room with an incurable malady, too much of an invalid to give it a mother's watchful eye. Long before, Anna had determined that come what would, nothing should make her hesitate in the responsibility that had devolved on her young shoulders. Not until one of her brothers had made good his obligations towards that famous distinctive with which the fates had so honored him in the inheritance ; not

till there was a reasonable assurance of its firm establishment hereafter—not till all this, would she allow a single thought of self to enter her mind.

And now what had come of all her generous devotion? One brother a miserable profligate; another afflicted with a worse madness; while the last remaining one, even in his youth, was too abandoned to give her the least cause for hope. Well; hereafter there would be no more self-denial; no more heart-aches; no more sleepless nights spent in devising new plans. It would be needful no more to sacrifice herself in a fruitless cause; no more to waste her energies in unappreciated performances; no more to trouble herself in any way. Now the man who had knelt at her feet for years, he should have her as a reward for his unswerving faithfulness.

The person referred to was a distinguished Austrian. Because he could enumerate so many titled ancestors they had called him a count, so Fred had stated; anyway, there were reasons for believing his claims to noble blood were good. Some internecine quarrel had driven him to seeking shelter on our hospitable shores, so rumor goes; he had come bringing no more of his belongings than the coat upon his back—and the skirts of

that were missing it, was further whispered. All his property was confiscated and consequently, in a strange land, he was compelled to begin life anew. But he had prospered since he came; by his own foresight and intelligence he had grown wealthy. Anna had met him and loved him at first sight.

There was much in common between these two; like her he was a virtuoso in the matter of registered descent, a devotee to the cause of Heraldry. But then he was more practical: "You cannot get thoroughbreds out of cart horses," he once said to her in confidence. At which, immediately, she drew herself up and without another word haughtily floated out of the room, proceeding forthwith to the sacred precincts of her bed chamber, from which she did not emerge again for several days. The count, however, with a tact that seems marvelous when are considered the obstacles which he must have met with, by some means contrived to reinstate himself in the lady's good graces, and at present was showing a persistent determination to please her that left her no cause to doubt the seriousness of his intentions.

Now, perhaps, amongst the many cares that infested the aristocratic mind of Miss Anna

Bourondeen, Cornelia, her younger sister, had not been the least of them. From the earliest days of this most unnatural creature, she had evinced a most decided inclination to wildness ; when as yet scarcely able to toddle, she would contrive to evade her nurse by the most clever manœuvring and join the boys at their play ; music teachers and dancing masters were compelled to give her up in despair ; and to keep her from becoming a regular hoyden, confinement in her bedroom had frequently been found necessary. Even this proved ineffectual, for more than one instance had been of a romantic jail breaking by means of the open window, a balcony, and a ladder supplied in some mysterious manner from below. Once the giddy thing had well nigh proved the death of poor Anna, and in truth had thrown her mother into a serious spasm of laughter, by running into the latter's room and announcing, in the most innocent way, that she intended marrying John, the coachman's son, a boy of ten and her senior by one year, and desired that the minister be sent for. Moreover, it could not be made clear to her young mind why children should not get married as well as grown folks, and it was with no inconsiderable difficulty that they persuaded her to relinquish her purpose.

Overflowing with animal spirits, thus Cornelia had grown up, a great favorite with the opposite sex, both young and old, and in consequence having little favor with her own. Now a maiden of twenty summers, with a figure thoroughly developed by a life spent much in the open air, full of health and good nature—beautiful she was beyond question. Yet it was not alone the pink cheek and buxom form—in themselves so persuasive—that endeared at once ; something in the expression of countenance, and in the soft form of the mouth that suggested a nature strongly passionate ; something even in the movement of the arm, or a toss of the head,—with men was irresistible.

But to cap the climax of her shortcomings Cornelia had wilfully and without reason fallen in love with Maude Hillern simply upon the description given to her by George. If George had lost his heart to the Sibyl, Cornelia would have gone and done likewise ; but that is neither here nor there. Instead of using her powers as a dutiful sister should, and endeavoring to impress upon the mind of her very daft brother the true enormity of his crime, so that he might save himself before it was too late, she actually had been aiding and abetting him. Oh, but it was dread-

ful ! It was inconceivable how any one could be so blind to the interests of their own flesh and blood—so blind even to their own well being.

At the lunch table it was pickles and prunes. The company divided against itself, Cornelia headed one faction while Anna headed the other. Cornelia had fewer adherents, for it has been noticed that she was not especially popular with her own sex. But Cornelia had a way of saying queer things at queer moments in a manner calculated to unsettle the argument of the other side, if such were ever possible. With very little discussion it was decided by a large majority, that the little chit had used the occasion of the death of her father to play upon Mr. George's very tender and susceptible heart strings, until his sympathies had been roused to a furor of lyrical passion. He had fallen in love with her poverty and helplessness ; thus in one voice was it declared. It had all been so romantic, their meeting and traveling in company—and George was such a sentimental creature. Through it all, Cornelia, busy with the olives or the ambrosia, had sat in silence, not once essaying so much as a word. It was her plan to give everybody an opportunity of expressing themselves, only offering a little fuel for rekindling the flame now and

then, as the fire of fancy sank low. When the time came, with a quick show of impetuosity, she suddenly inquired of Anna which she would rather give up, the man of her choice, who was indispensable to her happiness, or the luxuries of life, which were so unnecessary, and which were apt so soon to cloy upon the appetite.

The question Anna answered by calling her sister a giddy child, with her head full of trashy novels and notions that she knew not the meaning of.

"A very pretty sentiment," so she said; "very prettily expressed, but then so dreadfully hackneyed. How about posterity? What is to become of the country with the parents all paupers and nothing left to bring up the children with."

"Ugh, what an idea! Posterity should be vigorous and intelligent enough to take care of itself, and how can people be vigorous and intelligent when begotten in the agony of distorted passion?" Cornelia's tone was suggestive of fierceness; her dark eyes snapped, and there was a show of inward agitation. "As to the children, they somehow seemed to reach maturity, where the parents were in the least bit capable, and if not, why, then better not."



Cornelia was a great theorist ; she had her ideas of life as well as the rest of us, and if they were a little broader than some, it is hard nevertheless to say how they would be when put to practice. Certainly, Cornelia was fair to look upon, and with a market basket upon her arm and a worsted hood about her head, she would have been none the less fair ; and then such hearty exercise would not have brought the black circles to her eyes and a palpitation in her heart, or a shortness of breath, and such like needful concomitants of over-breeding ; but then—ah, but then ! Swimming seems an easy matter when viewed from the brink, but a novice who undertakes the same, makes sorry work of it ; just so from the palace window, to a person in good health and spirits, the peasant's life does not appear to be as bad as it is sometimes pictured. Only when the back begins to ache and the head to swim, do we learn what is real toil—when the sight fails of its power and the brain grows weary in its function, and there remains no hope of rest save in the grave ; when there are sweet small voices that call aloud to us and we dare not rest.

To Cornelia, as to all well-conditioned young people, the future lay before, a bright and bound-

less sea, that told no tales of storms, but beckoned on to the unknown shore across its borders. If there were clouds, they only enveloped the moment, and never grew so black but that the golden heavens were partly visible beyond. Idleness was her especial grief, she would have died of inactivity. Her life had passed like a sweet dream of happiness, nothing but momentary sorrows ever had been her portion.

Now in this company there was one more who must not be overlooked. Kate Newborn it was. That the Newborns were wealthy is beyond question ; but tales were told about old Newborn's possessions, seemingly so fabulous, that one scarce can give them credence. Deep down in the bowels of this great metropolis of America, where the light of day never has dared to penetrate, and where the fossil reminders of prehistoric ages lie buried beneath the huge upheavals of time ; where rust and corruption breed, and where the pestilence assembles its armies and sends them forth upon their deadly campaigns ; where the demons of hell with the terrestrial reptiles hold carnival—deep down in the most dismal depths, lay treasured-up accumulations of human corruptibility so enormous in sum that an enumeration of the same would have worn away

the allotted time of any human life in the accomplishment. Here, in wholes and outweighing portions, was represented the heart, the lungs, the liver, the entire arterial system of this little microcosmic segment ; and besides, in large blocks and lesser parts, sections of the municipal entirety. There were hordes of glistening coins, and there were cabinets of dazzling jewels and precious stones ; it was whispered that in jars, mysterious secrets were confined here, that let loose upon the world must have brought most disastrous revolutions. In short, what was not hidden in his vasty coffers could have had small availability in this world's affairs.

Whether or no the foundation of such a colossal fortune was laid by the collection of an ignominious tariff for the dispensing of butter and eggs to the hungry, or even by perambulating the country with pack on back for the purpose of instructing the children of the soil in the arts and sciences through the medium of suspenders and neckties ; whether it was laid by any other means of equivalent vulgarity—no one seems ever to have heard, or hearing, never has chosen to turn such knowledge over to the world's historiographer. What was generally accepted, and what



seemed the most likely, was the idea of supernatural generation : it was said that nature, in an unusual mood, had conceived and brought forth a bank president fully matured and entirely capable to assume the responsibility of the post.

The fact is, the past was of little consequence ; for there were those millions in the vaults, a matter so momentous in itself that it quite obscured all incidents less in degree. True, there had been many nasty reports concerning the past of these people, but society shut its eyes and stuffed its ears, holding such to be mere calumnies set in motion by those so unfortunate as not to be listed on the Newborn's calendar. If, too, in moments of extreme excitement any mountain peak in the family range began belching English moods and tenses sadly disjointed ; and if at such times would rise an effluvia strongly suggestive of the regions down stairs, society, without a complaint, took nerve medicine and remained unmoved, never making an effort to save the pure imported tongue from being engulfed in a torrent of barbarian vocables, never for a moment giving heed to the warnings of their olfactories. For was there not that double-square brown-stone front upon the avenue, and did not the possibility of an invitation to its

world famous gatherings lurk upon the horizon of every mother's son and daughter having a good claim to recognition in said society. And what a help, if such claim was in any way weak, to have their carriages draw up before the Newborn's awning on these occasions, and what a help to be able to bow to one of the Newborn family upon the street. Yes, these people were all the fashion without a doubt.

It was Anna who had been the first to come forward and welcome Kate Newborn when Madame Prudhomme, for the first time, had led her, all fluttering and roses, into the school-room of her ultra fashionable seminary for young ladies. The situation for the young girl was surely a trying one, compelled as she was to breast that solid phalanx of curious eyes ; but whether her embarrassing position touched Miss Anna's heart, or whether any rumors regarding the father's millions had reached the ears of the same, that young lady has neglected to inform us.

Kate had been a pretty child, and as a woman she was no less prepossessing ; moreover, having an ease of manner and quiet grace she was capable of maintaining herself in any society. She was the salvation of the family, from a social

standpoint, so it was whispered in private. . The same conditions, physical or spiritual as the case may be, that had made the father one of the most eminent of financiers, had concurred to make the daughter equally distinguished in the world of fashion. However, in spite of all this Miss Kate still remained unmarried, although she was fast approaching that time of life when a maiden's fancies turn away from thoughts of men and when they seek solace in pug dogs and spaniels for the love which is denied them, and wed themselves to the church or to some pet charity. The truth was, Miss Kate's position, from a matrimonial point of view, was a trying one, for such men as she was able to admire, her own prospective value rendered timorous, and the moths and butterflies that came fluttering to her very brightly-burning candle quite disgusted her with man in the abstract.

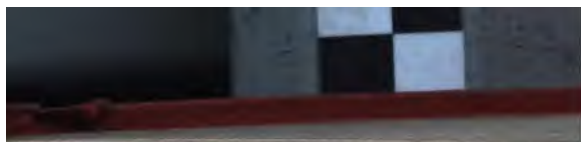
There is little doubt but what she would have accepted George had he asked her, and could she have brought herself to believing that such would have been for his good. But, like the sensible woman that she was, she accepted her fate without the least show of jealousy, and was quite inclined to side with Cornelia in the question of Miss

Hillern, though she took pains not to offend in anyway the feelings of her more particular friend.

Others there were in this party, deserving, no doubt, of a separate niche in history ; but then there are so many just like them that really there is no room—they must be left sadly floundering in the horrid gulf of commonplaceness without any special mention. These, in their views, of course, coincided with her whom they chose to regard as their heroine, meekly following her in the manner of all organized bodies, not daring to think otherwise, never for a moment caring to do the same.

So the ladies chatted together, and the flies buzzed upon the window panes, and the pet spaniel busied himself, going from one person to another in search of dainty morsels suitable for his patrician interior. Pompey, the big St. Bernard, looked wistfully in at the window upon this forbidden country, and presently he gave vent to his disapproval of the Spaniel's ill bred behavior in a gruff bark ; then he turned away in disgust and laid his huge self upon the veranda so heavily that the whole fabric of the building trembled. Byrnes, the butler, an ancient and most indispensable attribute that had grown up and

grown old in the service of the family, came and went with all due seriousness, conscious of the weight of his position. Thus the hour passed by and the time was rapidly approaching when the guests of the afternoon would begin to assemble.



CHAPTER VIII.

A CONFESSION, A CONTROVERSY, AND SOME OTHER
MATTERS AS WELL.

One by one the carriages began to turn in at the Bourendeen's porte cochère, and drive gayly up to the house, to deposit their loads of precious freight at the doorstep. Now and then a more indifferent or less important person would make an appearance by the little postern gate, coming on foot along the path that led up to the house at one side.

Through the patriarchal oaks and larches that shaded this venerable and most excellent abode, the wind was floating softly, barely stirring the leaves upon the branches. The afternoon was perfect, scarcely a cloud broke the blue uniformity of the heavens ; only here and there a patch of snow-white fleece drifting dreamily on high. Under the trees seats were scattered about, and gradually the company began to collect in little groups.

It was to be a numerous assemblage, and

already the guests were many, though as yet ladies were largely predominant ; for men hold themselves wisely aloof on such occasions, until the last, when refreshments are in order, and when their sex can be the more strongly represented in numbers. There were many notables here. Beneath a spreading oak sat the wife of a real English Duke, her presence in this country being accounted for by reason of the vast landed interests of her husband in the great West. A goodly crowd of wives and dowagers surrounded this duchess, and within range of her all-seeing eye, was her daughter, seemingly in very merry company. A countess was there as well,—her name being a reminder of the vanity of titles and the fickleness of the French nature. Then there was a young man, short, slight and of a melancholy cast of countenance ; the admired of all beholders, and the object of many a significant glance from mothers with marriageable daughters. He was a lineal descendant of one of the great houses of England, and a most eligible person, so it was reported ; only two tiresome individuals were holding him and the title apart, and they of uncertain health. Fred Bourondeen had said something about this one furnishing society notes to the leading newspapers at so

much a line, but Fred had been duly suppressed by his sister Anna before the report had gotten into general circulation.

Finance, and politics, and dry goods, and iron, and wheat, were well represented. There came bankers and one distinguished secretary of the interior—the interior of what Freddy has not yet informed us. A group of seven young ladies were here, bearing strong resemblances to each other, rising in steps from four feet to the neighborhood of six, and of years to correspond. They were the offshoots of a famous house that sold needles and pins,—never, however, in quantities of less than one thousand packages—and spools of thread, but these by the hundred gross only. These were reputed to have prospects, and by some here was thought a good stream to angle in. Among others there was a family that had risen to distinction of late through much pot-boiling, bubble-blowing, and coffee ; and another that had well nigh fallen from grace through the inconstancy of the feminine mind in a matter of trimmings.

Maude Hillern had come at last, and now stood in one quarter surrounded by a goodly group of young ladies. A most charming young person, so it was admitted generally ; only a dis-

appointed mamma now and then gave her a cold and haughty glance. Every one sought her out to pay their respects to her, and the men showed a decided willingness to linger in her neighborhood and exchange soft nothings with her whenever the opportunity presented.

Cornelia was devoting herself assiduously to her prospective sister-in-law, and a pretty pair they made, so contrasted as they were, in appearance. With Cornelia, the pink cheek was predominant, while with Maude it was the soul; the attractions of the one lay in her regular features and her sprightliness, the other captivated by her expression, at once animated and sweetly sympathetic. Cornelia was a brunette of a decided type, while Maude was inclined to be light—that jumping-off place between blonde insipidity and dark-complexioned passionateness. But there was no appearance of meekness about Maude, albeit there was every indication of a warm and loving heart within that bosom. Here one could imagine a careful housewifery and feel that one's wishes would be held in affectionate regard; that one's coming would be watched for with faithful expectancy and, no matter what the condition, the same patient sufferance and ungrudging



tenderness would be shown at all times without default.

But where was George? Mr. Kilman Kernochan Kon, like a fire-brand from one powder-house to another, had been going about from group to group, throwing each one by turns into a condition of convulsions, and then passing on to the next. Presently, after he had emitted one particularly exciting bit of pleasantry, he turned and gave a searching glance through the assemblage; seeing nothing of the one he sought, he walked over to where he perceived Miss Anna standing conversing with a friend.

"Ah, Miss Bourondeen, the smiles of heaven inspire an epic to your courteous hospitality. But what has become of George? Surely with him absent your verse is but a hemistich."

"Business before pleasure, I suppose. You know George is becoming a man of affairs now, and possibly one of these has detained him. He certainly will be here soon, however."

Miss Anna had been dividing her attentions between Mr. Wright Hood and somebody's daughter; she may have had some scheme in her mind; she was always furthering human concerns. Kernochan bowed to Wright and Anna

introduced him to the lady ; while he was addressing himself to her, in his robust way, Anna offered a few commonplaces to Mr. Hood. But Mr. Hood was not in a talkative mood, and presently something attracted her attention in another part of the grounds, so she excused herself and walked away. In a moment some one came along and carried off the remaining fair and then Kernochan turned to Hood and gave him a scrutinizing glance.

“Hallo, Wright ; what is the matter ? One could measure the length of your face by yards. You are not moping I hope, because you have been playing the angel for the fool to rush in ahead of you.”

“Oh, no, Kilman, not at all, I assure you ; I am quite in my usual spirits. It is the seraph that has gained the prize this time ; and the fool, being a fool, congratulates himself in being a fool and not having ventured where fools were scarce likely to succeed. No ; George may take the sweet-faced doll and my blessings go with her.”

“Sweet-faced doll ! A very animated one I am sure. Come, Wright, that does not sound well, I see quite plainly that you are jealous. The sweet-faced doll certainly possesses all the attributes that are needful to make a complete

whole of the unfinished being as he is born into this world."

"That involves a matter of chemistry, my friend ; the problem never has been solved. In their case the formula may work itself out to perfection. But say, old man, why did not this adorable satisfaction-piece fall in love with you ? Surely you preceded him in giving her the opportunity, and she would not have been the first girl to lose her heart in your quarter, we all know quite well."

"Perhaps I never went so far as to betray any tender feelings for her, and you know a wise woman never gives scope to her love until a man has shown very plainly that he desires it. However, this is neither here nor there ; I do not hesitate to express admiration for the young lady, but I assure you that I am not in love with her."

"Perhaps not, Kilman ; but I venture to say that you would not at all object to occupying George's gaiters just at the present moment had fortune so willed it. No offence is intended, I wish you to understand,—a mere matter of chemistry. You never made love to the girl, because you are far too shrewd a man to venture on unpleasant and embarrassing shoals, and you had quite enough intuition to discover at the out-



set, that your condition of being was not such as was needful to bring about a suitable reaction in her case."

"To the devil with your chemistry! You would seek to win a woman's love by the application of acids on the pericardium, and make of this world a laboratory to woo her in. In the name of all things problematical, why has not the girl fallen in love with your humble self? I am quite sure she has for you a great admiration."

"Why is it that a woman who marries a man from admiration is not unlikely to fall in love with any one but her husband before the honeymoon is over—generally with some stupid clown?"

"You had better compile a work on the chemistry of love. I am sure it would be a great success. Make out a list of formulas so that every youth and maiden will need merely to refer to them in order to learn just the sort of husband or mistress that will be necessary to satisfy the conditions of their being. Ugh!" Kilman Kernochan Kón, although the day was warm, shuddered as if a blast of icy wind had chilled him through and through. "No wonder the



green darkness of despair is written upon your countenance, when you have succeeded in reducing all the sentiment in human nature to a substance so concrete that it can be collected in a glass bottle. I suppose we will soon be able to find it upon the shelves of every apothecary. A nice humor you are in, I must confess. I will venture to say that you have not yet been up to pay your respects to the bride-elect."

"You have been, I am aware."

"So you have been watching the young lady with all your eyes, like a love-sick school-boy."

"The sight of her has been unavoidable since she last stood directly in range of my eyes. You did not spend a great while yourself conversing with her, I noticed."

"Why no ; I did not care to take up too much of the young lady's time when there were so many others to be presented to her."

"Oh, indeed ? I had thought that your hasty retreat might have been made in order to escape from a position so awkward."

"I do not understand."

"No ; I suppose not. The report has not reached your ears, naturally enough."

"What report ?"

"Why about Miss Hillern's bills to her Parisian dressmaker."

"What is the reason that they have excited interest?"

"Well, rumor says that you paid them yourself."

"How's that?"

"Oh, it's nothing ; quite natural, as things go nowadays."

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

"What in the devil should I pay her bills for? This is a most singular connection of ideas."

"That's what rumor wants to know. You have not a high reputation as a patron of charity."

"What has set this story afloat?"

"Curiosity as to how Miss Hillern contrived to dress in such magnificent costumes."

"Magnificent costumes! She, the most modest in her apparel?"

"Rumor says magnificent; it is synonymous with loud."

"Thunder, this must be contradicted!"

"You did not pay them, then?"

"By my soul, I did not!"

"Positive?"

"You are cool, I must confess. Where did you hear this wretched fiction?"

"Just before you came, I overheard the countess telling Anna how she had had it from her dressmaker who originally was employed by this Parisian one, and who had made the bills out in your name herself."

"By Heavens, what is to be done?"

"Why, nothing at all. Let the story wear itself out of its own nimbleness. The person who invented the ridiculous calumny is the one most likely to suffer on account of its flimsy fabrication. I mentioned it to you solely on account of the interest it bears, viewed from a metaphysical standpoint. The human brain is, after all, but a very poor kind of a mirror that warps and twists ideas into all sorts of grim and hideous shapes in degree according to the extent of its own imperfectness."

"Burn your metaphysics!"

"Or remodel the mirror?"

"Annihilate the whole of womankind and there will be some hope for peace in this world," Kilman growled; "I am going to see if this tale has got into active circulation yet."

"I would—but Kilman use your ears, they

are better weapons than your mouth. Don't make a fool of yourself ; let the idiots have their swing."

Wright Hood sat in silence, watching Kilman as he hurried away. It was rather a secluded place in which he was, and as no one came to disturb him he did not stir, but followed the movements of his friend until he lost sight of him in a crowd of people that had gradually gathered about Maude and Cornelia ; then he suddenly turned his back upon them as if the sight of human faces irritated him, and leaning his head upon one hand, thus remained for a few moments listlessly kicking the legs of the bench on which he sat. Strangely haggard and careworn he seemed to have grown all at once ; in the shadow that the trees cast upon him there was about his countenance something which suggested that the years were passing with him, —that expression of old age coming at odd moments, stealing across the features of youth, a reminder of what in future time must be. Soon, however, he perceived that his solitary position was rendering him conspicuous, and presently he rose to his feet and looked about him. Seeing that there were still a number of people in the neighborhood where he was most interested, he



turned and sauntered away in the direction of the stables ; for here he saw a good opportunity to escape from the company ; and he had a notion to inspect the Bourondeen stud and also to exchange a word or two with Dick, the groom, a man in whose honest and simple nature he could find more sympathy than with many in that assemblage.

“Here is revealed a pretty kettle of disappointed hopes,” murmured Kilman Kon ; and his ire expanded like a balloon and bore him lightly across the roadway in the direction of Miss Cornelia Bourondeen. Now Kilman was possessed of a most equable temper and rarely became ruffled ; but upon great provocation he could fly into a desperate passion, though this would quickly expend itself simply out of its own sheer violence. Consequently, this match to his spiritual explosiveness had set it off so quickly that by the time he reached the others his wrath had quite disappeared, and nothing remained but the smoke of the discharge which was wreathing itself into such fantastic shapes that he felt himself constrained to laugh at the ridiculousness of their appearance.

Kilman straightway went and mingled with

the group of visitors. He said a pleasant word or two to a sweet-faced old lady sitting near at hand ; he smiled benignly upon a young person who had been sadly victimized by some one in the designing department of the earth's human workshop, and quite cheered her sad and neglected heart ; moreover, he did not forget to cast a flirtatious glance towards the fair Cornelia who still was standing at her post, faithful to her brother's love ; nor did he overlook poor little Miss Fanchon, the meek-faced governess, who had been selected for the mighty task of bringing up Master Freddy in the way he should go, and who was still retained in the family as a generally useful person, available on all occasions.

But Kilman had a purpose in his mind—which was a very novel experience ; and he felt deeply the weight of the responsibility. While he had been busily fulfilling his social duties, he, none the less, had not failed to make a complete survey of the company. All looked favorable, he thought ; he was unable to detect anything which seemed to indicate that this bit of gossip had already spread through the gathering. “ No George as yet ? ”—which set him wondering once more. Seeing Miss Anna near by, it occurred to him that here would be the place to go for the

latest budget of news. So he carefully made a detour through the trees, and carefully stole up to a large cedar beneath which that personage was sitting engaged in an eager colloquy with the countess.

"Yes," the countess was saying: "It was such a burning shame that so promising a young man should be so foolishly perverse as to throw himself deliberately away on such a person,—a person without a penny, the daughter of a vulgar physician, associate of none but vulgar people,—a Bohemian without a home, that had followed her Bohemian father in his wanderings, that knew nothing of social matters, such as a woman fitting to be the wife of a Bourondeen should know. Oh, but it is too dreadful to think of! If she had even a family name to bring there might be some excuse at least." Miss Anna was quite of the same mind, but she had been of the same mind for some time, as has already been stated. Moreover, she was bent on doing her friend a good turn by finding her a suitable husband for her daughter.

It was not too late yet. George had always been attached to this lady's marketable rosebud; in all probability he would have chosen her had not this misfortune befallen him. Now if all

went well, and they took the tide when it served, the countess might yet secure him for her son-in-law. This story once in circulation,—and they had taken every pains that such persons should overhear it as were most likely to bring it into active circulation,—would pique George ; and Miss Hillern's temper was, without doubt, so inflammable, being French, that, brought face to face with the accusation, she would in no way attempt to deny it.

So much Kilman learned ; and, furthermore, he was highly edified to overhear Anna congratulating the lady upon her wise choice in selecting him as the *particeps criminis*, as if all the tales that were told about him were true. He had such a reputation for being wild that they could not have done better. But here some one chanced along and he could ascertain nothing more, so he quietly stole from cover, meditating deeply ; presently he saw Mrs. Marsh, his old friend, and an idea presented itself to his observation.

“ Ah, Rosalie, this is an unexpected pleasure ; I thought that countless cubic miles of briny deep floated between you and the rest of us.”

“ Kilman Kou and no other ! Well, I am equally surprised, for I had heard that you were somewhere in the antipodes.”



"I have not been in America a very great while, indeed. But when did you return?"

"Why we have been here these three months ; but I have been living quietly since then. You see I am a married woman now, and domestic duties are little despots, you know."

"Indeed? Well I was just thinking about you when I happened to see you. This place always reminds me of the many good times we have had here together."

"And I was reminded of you as well ; but you were the last person I expected to meet, for only yesterday Wright Hood told me that you had gone on an embassy to China, the purpose of which was to introduce polite ideas to the untutored heathen."

"Well, to tell the truth, I am not altogether sure that I have not. You see I am, by repute, a man of so many avocations that my feeble intellect becomes quite bewildered when I undertake to determine just what I am doing. Only a week ago I found myself in the interior of Africa distributing religious tracts to the natives in connection with fashion-plates for the purpose of creating a taste for the latest Parisian fashions and a market for dress fabrics. While in London, a short time past, I received a letter, for-

warded to me from Burmah by an English friend, which a dear old uncle of mine up in Northern Vermont had written to me. It proved to be a twenty-page lecture on temperance, copied from a book of sermons, I think. It seems the poor old gentleman had heard that I was keeping a bar in the lobby of the Grand Fandango's Palace. Bah, that is nothing ! In all probability you will next hear of me as an invited guest of that distinguished landed proprietor, the man in the moon ; wandering about his estates, making friends with mountains, all to gather inspiration for a great epic poem that is to be telephoned, complete in one night, to the leading morning paper. However, at the present moment I am laboring under the impression that America is harboring me. The truth is, not long ago I was seized with a desire to visit the haunts of my childhood, and, presto, here am I, and bored as can be. But that was before I had the pleasure of meeting you so unexpectedly. If you will allow me I will conduct you to the arbor, a very favorite place of ours, as I remember."

She took his arm, and they wandered down the path together.

"By the way," he said, after they had passed a short distance into the woods. "What do you

think of the latest tidbit that has been offered society to nibble at?"

"I do not know that I understand what it is you refer to."

"Why, it is common talk—all about a French lady of rank, or rather an American lady wed to a French title."

"I have not heard it ; do tell me ! It is something rich and new without a doubt."

"Oh, it is nothing in the least unusual ; the only thing unusual is the report getting about."

"You have excited my curiosity ; I am dying to hear."

"But it is so dreadful."

"Ah ! don't keep me in suspense. I am perishing for the want of something of the kind. They have kept me so close of late that I know nothing about what has been going on in the world."

"Since you desire it so much I will tell you. Some twenty years ago when this lady brought home to the bosom of her household a genuine French nobleman with an unquestionable record as to ancestors and exploits, but in worldly possessions as poor as the babe unborn, society snickered. It seems, however, that the laugh was all on the other side, for if I do not mistake,

she knew quite well what she was about in taking into her employ—appointing as husband to herself—a person so distinguished to look after her reputation whenever she chose to put it aside the better to indulge herself in little pet vices.”

“Oh, dear! the wretch! to think of such a thing! And because she is wealthy, society upholds her in it. There she was walking about in all this distinguished company, holding her head as high as any one. Gracious Heavens, what is to become of the daughter? Poor thing, I am going to cut her, and she was always so proud about her stupid count of a father. Well, well, well; I must go and tell May about this or I shall die. But she has heard it all before now, of course, so that pleasure is spoiled. Dear me, one loses so much when one is married; children are such a bother!”

Mrs. Marsh, with a show of irritation, tapped her pretty little foot upon the ground several times, and then she seized Kilman’s arm and gave it such an enthusiastic squeeze that it came near to unseating that gentleman’s accustomed equanimity. After a short time they strolled back together and presently the lady, seeing someone with whom she wished to speak, excused herself from Mr. Kon and walked away.



"There," said Kilman to himself as he stood at one side watching Mrs. Marsh proceeding across the lawn ; " I have secured a medium for the diffusion of knowledge quite equal to that of my lady friend over yonder. No George yet ? Well, if I do not die before night from lead poisoning, or get a poniard in my heart, why, I shall offer up profound thanks to the Father of Light for his goodness and mercy in preserving me from harm."

Kilman turned to look about him for a moment ; he felt that sweet consciousness of duty well performed and he deemed it no more than his right that what next he did should be of an agreeable nature. All at once his eyes ceased to wander and became transfixed to one point ; in a moment he started very cautiously to walk forward, following the direct line of his optical impressions, and carefully keeping himself so that the trunk of a large oak tree should remain all the while between himself and this object of excitability. Presently he came up to the tree, and finding it as dead to the transmission of humanity as to luminous beams, he paused. " New troubles," he murmured to himself as he stood there peering cautiously into the umbrage ; " this life is rapidly becoming a burden." Soon

he turned, evidently satisfied with what he had seen, and retraced his footsteps, proceeding hastily in the direction of the manor as if anxious to escape some disagreeable meeting. He had not gone far when he saw George Bourondeen coming towards him across the lawn.

"Ah ! George," he exclaimed, as he came up to that person, "where have you been ? You ought to be ashamed of yourself for leaving your lady love so long to the tender mercies of a heartless assemblage."

But the lawyer was in no mood for jesting.

"Where is she ?" he inquired.

"She was last seen in company with that very wicked friend of yours, Mr. Hood. I imagine that she has quite given up all hope of ever seeing you again ere this, and is now seeking consolation in him. I fancy if you walk down towards the glen you may meet her there, for I saw them myself setting out together in the direction of that very romantic spot. May I have the honor to act as your second ? Shall I order dictionaries and cough lozenges for two ?"

George did not deign to answer, but immediately turned upon his heel and walked quickly away.

"By Heavens, it's going to rain." Kilman



shivered. "If there are not thunder clouds gathering on his horizon then I am no weather prophet. Well, it is my destiny to live and suffer. But if this be so, then let me die of surprise."

Mr. Kilman Kon went roaming gloomily amidst the deepening shadows beneath the dense foliage of the ancestral trees. But darkness could not linger long upon his soul; soon the gloom was dispersed; presently he went lightly floating across the green turf of the lawn and coming amidst a bevy of rosebuds, he set them in a flutter of smiles like the balmy breath of a beautiful summer's eve. Soon Kilman's cares were quite forgotten amidst his new-found pleasures; he began to enjoy himself as only Kilman knew how to enjoy.

Wright Hood made his way to the stables, and examined the horses, and chatted with the groom and played with the dogs; but somehow he could not contrive to get up any interest even here, and soon he found himself strolling back towards the house. Reaching the lawn, he perceived Maude and Cornelia walking together along the path, and immediately he went over to them.

"You impolite man, where have you been?"

Maude exclaimed, as he approached. "I think it was extremely unkind in you not to come and speak to me when I was all alone amongst strangers and George not on hand to encourage me, either. Can you imagine what has become of him? He promised to be here at four and now it is nearly five, I think."

"Possibly he was delayed in the city and has had to wait for a later train."

"That is what they all say; I suppose it is true. He is such a busy person nowadays that I find it quite impossible to depend upon him. But, you wretched being, where have you been these last three weeks and more? I began to think that you had been translated, or that something equally improbable had happened to you."

"Well, I can't say, I am sure; I begin to feel the approach of old bachelorhood, and am getting really too indolent to look up old friends. However, I apologize for not having paid my respects to you before; the fact is, I am such an awkward fellow in company that I feel it to be doing a kindness in holding myself aloof."

"Nonsense, you can make yourself the most agreeable person imaginable in company if you choose. And don't let me hear you talking about old bachelorhood again; there are dozens

of girls here, I venture to say, who would like nothing better than the opportunity of making your life happy, and quite capable of doing so, too."

"I know it quite well. But there are so many of them that they bewilder me ; I never could decide where to choose."

"You ridiculous creature. Come, will you not join us? I want to walk about this park a little, it is so beautiful. I think we may leave the company just for a moment."

"With pleasure, Miss Hillern ; I will lead you to one of the most charming little nooks hereabouts."

Cornelia discreetly excused herself saying she wished to see Anna a moment regarding some matter of importance, and the two walked down the path, chatting together pleasantly.

It was a romantic bit of woodland in which they soon found themselves, and presently they came to a little arbor that overlooked a narrow glen. A patient flowing brook prattled in the hollow beneath them, and its soft shimmer was here and there visible through the shrubbery. Maude, in her enthusiastic way, knelt upon the rustic seat which encircled the structure and leaned over the railing, watching the pretty scene

with true delight. She was reminded of Brittany—so like a "*petit vailon*," where she had loved to ramble in her girlhood, where her father had secured the privilege of fishing in the stream that wandered through it. Often she had followed at his side and gathered mosses along its edge.

Hood stood by in silence, not seeming to hear what she was saying, watching her thus in a musing way as if his thoughts were far from there. In a moment, however, he turned from her and crossing over to the other side of the arbor he threw himself into a corner, and, leaning his head upon his hands sat there, picking bits of bark from the back of his seat in a most spiritless manner, as if the powers that be had set him that especial task, and there was no recourse, distasteful as it was to him. After a moment Maude looked about her and, perceiving him, she jumped down from her perch and went and stood before him.

"What has come over you to-day?" she said. "You do not seem a bit like yourself. You act and talk as if you had not a single object in the world to live for."

"Well, I haven't; that is just the trouble."

"You? Why, you silly thing,"—she gave a



little laugh,—“I should think that a man of your wealth and position would have everything to live for.”

“Not so at all, I assure you. The chief object of being, for which men live in the achievement, is denied me in the possession.”

“Rather a paradoxical statement, I must confess. Do you mean that money is the chief end of man, or happiness, or both?”

“Both, or one, or other, as you like ; they imply the same meaning nowadays.”

“Then a person as poor as myself should have everything to live for ; which is a fact that bears no refutation, taken in one sense. But since the pleasures of being are denied you in their possession, there is still left open to you an opportunity of self-gratification in the pursuit of that which you do not possess. For instance, why do you not endeavor to distinguish yourself in some useful career ? Money, certainly, cannot secure that to you, and I should think it would be the source of an immense personal satisfaction to exert one’s self in the achievement of greatness.”

“Alas, that gratification is denied me as is everything else. No ; it is impossible for me to succeed in any pursuit, for I have not the necessary ability ; I am quite incapable of achieving

even mediocrity. When at school I was but a dull student that never rose above the middle of his class; not even a dunce whose duncedom might have resolved itself into genius of some sort."

"Then why don't you turn philanthropist and devote yourself to the good of your fellow-man?"

"And what is to be gained here? Philanthropy, as the word is used at the present day, is simply the name for an agreeable little dissipation which society allows itself in lieu of others which are denied us in this age of refinement; and which but swells the burden which the burden-bearing portion of humanity is compelled to bear. Philosophy teaches that one had as well feed the vermin in one's cellar, or the hornets in one's barn, or cultivate the germs that breed disease—all out of pity because they are God's creatures."

"But you might devote your life to the discovery of some remedy for mitigating such social disorders."

"In what field would you recommend me to begin?"

"Well, let us say politics, for instance. From what I can learn of your government, I think here is a great field for the study of a dangerous disease of a highly parasitic nature. You might



enlist yourself in the cause and perhaps secure the enactment of laws that would prove greatly beneficial to the community."

"But patrician tendencies make a timid ballot. I doubt if I could so gain favor with the majority as to have it make a choice of me for such a task. Even if I could succeed in getting myself elected to some office, I should find myself too much out of place to accomplish anything ; for, it is said, politics and honesty are not on speaking terms, and honesty has always been one of my hobbies ; it is so convenient, you know."

"You are incorrigible ! Look at George ; he has enough to live on comfortably without exertion, and yet how bravely he has gone to work at his profession."

"But George has ambition, which I have not ; and George has capabilities, which is not in the least like me ; and then George has you, which should be inspiration enough to make any man toil to the limits of his powers."

"Nonsense ! Am I the only woman in the world ? You seem quite determined to make yourself appear the fool, at any rate."

"No exertion of the will ; quite natural, I assure you. However, you are doubtless well aware that you never could have fallen in love

with me yourself. Women such as you do not fall in love with men of my calibre."

"A true woman's ideal is of something strong and enduring, some one to be looked up to and exalted to her plane of admiration ; she never can give her whole heart to one who is weak and hesitating ; she needs some one to lean upon far too much."

"And such being the case, where am I to look for the inspiration ? Yes ; I have learned all this to my life-long sorrow. But let us be serious, Maude, for I wish to speak a word with you, and this will be my last opportunity."

"What is it, Wright ? I am always glad to listen to you ; I am sure that I have no friend whom I esteem more highly."

"Well, I scarce know where to begin ; I am but a dull unimpressionable sort of a creature ; you must understand that the transient disturbances of life, which make a deep impression upon some, can have but little effect upon my phlegmatic nature ; I am incapable of any deep sorrow. Yet, Maude, in strange contradiction to all this I wish to tell you that my regard for you has grown most deep ; it seems to me as if you were become a portion of my life and to lose you were to lose all."

She started slightly and an expression of pain passed across her countenance. She was thinking that she was going to lose him, that this friend had failed in his friendship, that she would be a cause of deep sorrow to him. She opened her mouth as if to speak, but the words failed her. Seeing all this he caught her hand in his.

“Forgive me ! I forgot myself. I have caused you pain in making you think that I may suffer. I assure you it is a mere passing pang—I am so unimpressionable. There, it is all over now ; I am quite myself again.”

“You will forget this ? You will be my friend—and George’s friend ?”

She was sitting beside him now ; she placed her hand upon his shoulder and looked up into his face.

“Yes ; truly I promise. I have done wrong in mentioning this, but you don’t know how I have longed to tell it to you. You and George shall be to me as brother and sister. It is but a fancy, a mere whim ; I should not have spoken had I thought that you would take it seriously. I know I am a perfect brute, I haven’t a bit of feeling.” He rose to his feet. “Let us return now, George must have arrived by this time, and without doubt he is looking for you.”

She rose and took his arm, and they walked out of the arbor together; as they followed along the path, in a moment, George's tall form appeared in the distance, coming towards them at a quick pace.

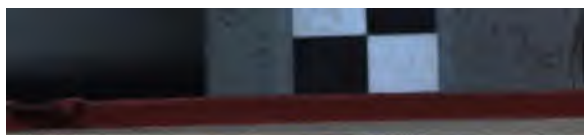
"How could you be so cruel as to neglect your fair mistress in this manner?" Hood exclaimed, as he came up. "She had quite given up all hope of ever seeing you again, and I have been endeavoring, in my clumsy way, to console her for her loss."

But Wright saw in his friend's face a strangely haggard look that made him stop short.

Maude threw herself into her lover's arms, but he offered her no caress in return, seeming almost to shrink from her embrace.

"There," he said, "I want to speak to you a moment; will you come with me please?"

Hood was going to leave them together, thinking that his company would not be desired. But George, seeing him start to walk away, turned to him and requested that he would join them, adding that it was his wish to speak with him as well. So the three went slowly back to the arbor which Maude and Wright had just left.



CHAPTER IX.

A RENCONTRE.

It was a feeling of awkwardness that came over Hood as he followed George and Maude into the arbor that same afternoon. George's troubled expression told him that something was wrong, and he was in no turn of mind to care to become a spectator in a lover's quarrel. He was wishing heartily that the ground would open and swallow him up so that he might escape.

"What has happened, George?" Maude exclaimed, throwing herself into his arms, after they had entered the arbor, and glancing up into his face ; "you look as if some dreadful calamity had befallen you."

But he pushed her from him gently ; and turning away, he passed to the end of the enclosure, and stood for a moment looking down into the dark hollow beneath him. Maude then glanced at Hood and they began to exchange anxious looks, though neither of them spoke. In a moment, however, George gave a sudden

start, and then came back to them again, walking with a firm step.

"Maude," he said, "when two people love each other deeply and truly, should not either one of them be willing to make every sacrifice for the other's well-being?"

"Yes; even to their life, were it so needful. I know no greater proof of sincere and steadfast affection."

"Then, Maude, if you love me with that true love which knows but its own devotion, I am going to ask you to make a sacrifice."

"What do you mean, George? My life, my whole being I give to you; bid me to do that which you see is best."

"Listen to me, then. You are strong and can endure much; it will be but a momentary sorrow; you can soon find consolation. Maude, I am going to ask you to give up the thought of me as your husband."

"Do you care for me no longer, then, George?" It was a plaintive cry of distress; she seemed dazed, as one who had been struck a blow upon the head.

He caught her in his arms. "Nay; do not ask me that. You are my happiness, my life; words cannot express how dear I hold you to my

heart. But love is selfish, Maude ; to keep you must cause to others a lifelong sorrow—others who are weak and cannot bear great suffering.”

She turned from him, and, throwing herself upon the seat, bowed her head upon the railing.

“What has happened, George?” Hood exclaimed. “Surely this can have no connection with that ridiculous story?”

“I know not of what you speak. Has some new trouble developed itself?”

“The story that has been going the rounds. But no, it was too transparent ; you never would have given it a passing thought. Come, will you not tell me what unforeseen calamity has suddenly precipitated itself upon you?”

“Truly, I cannot ; it concerns the honor of my family ; my own honor as well. I am in the power of one who knows no mercy, and I must bow before that will. To marry her is to bring death upon my parents’ head, to myself, ignominy, and to her, sorrow and shame. No, I must not ask it of her.”

Maude sprang to her feet at this and came to them again.

“A woman shares her husband’s joys and sorrows ; his life is her life ; she should know no other.”

"Child, I have been forbidden to marry you ; the penalty for disobedience to that decree will be my parents' shame ; they are old and cannot bear such deep affliction as must ensue."

"If destiny so wills, then I submit. Yes ; I am strong ; I have already known what sorrow is ; I am still able to endure a greater suffering."

"Nay ; do not let me hear you speak thus ! My deepest pain is knowing you may suffer in your love for me. But, little one, you are very young ; you never have been tried ; you cannot know the true depth of your own passion."

"Yes, yes, yes ; my faith, my sympathies, my affection, never have been tested ; such wounds quickly heal ; I will soon forget."

"You mock me, Maude ; though the scars remain through all, in time you will become unconscious of their presence. It is of your future which I wish to speak—which stirs many apprehensions in my breast—which, I gladly would know, bore brighter prospects. Ah, if I could but feel that you were in life well cared for, and wanted nothing that you might desire, then would my mind still rest in peace. Maude, here is one whose love for you is truly as strong as mine though he may never have confessed it ; who is better able to provide for you the needs of

life ; who, without doubt, would make for you a far more kind and considerate husband than myself. Can you not bring yourself to thinking of him as you have thought of me, if only out of gratitude for his unhesitating faithfulness to you ?”

“George, George, in the name of justice and truth, is there no remedy ? How can a person so hold you in his power that your life is not worth the sigh of a woman ? I am not a Solomon, but, by my faith, this seems nonsense.”

It was Hood who interrupted. In the agony of conflicting emotions his voice trembled ; he thought but of the despair that must come upon the heart of her he loved.

“Ay, to you it may seem thus—to you who know not the innermost workings of a terrible distemper. No ; the contagion has fixed itself on me and there is no escape but in its sufferance.”

George alone was calm. He had schooled himself to this, and now every faculty was under complete control. Maude had turned from them and was pacing up and down at one end of the arbor. All at once she lifted her head that had been bowed upon her breast and, walking quickly

up to George, spoke to him in a low, measured tone that betrayed no tremor.

"Has this sudden visitation, this thwarting of your purposes, so petrified your senses as to render the higher feelings in a woman's breast incomprehensible to you? If you have so misunderstood the organization of my being as to imagine this, then let me tell you that a compulsory existence with one to whom the craving of the heart did not enchain me by strong indissoluble bonds, would so offend against my nature that death were preferable."

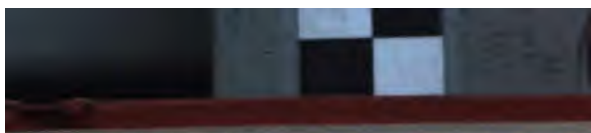
"Forgive me, Maude, if in my over-anxiety for your well-being I forgot the needs of the spirit."

He made a motion as if to clasp her in his arms, but with a haughty gesture of the hand, she waved him back.

"Stay! I mistrust you. You could not surely have spoken thus had your love for me been as deep as you confessed it."

"You wrong me, Maude; I had but the one thought; I tell you the sad and solemn truth."

"Ay, it is the truth! You are a man and I a woman. You can never understand a woman's needs. Be it so; she lives but for these painful revelations; she never will be understood."



“Yet she may stifle the flame of her desires, and, holding in passive durance her greatest worldly needs, live for those whom chance brings into her life. By doing this which I ask of you, you can bring much happiness to him whose every thought is for your good, whose thought for you has saved you many trials ; besides which you place yourself in a position where many noble deeds may be accomplished that never could be thought of in the struggle for a mere subsistence.”

“Nay, nay ; you do wrong to try a woman thus ! How shall I answer you ? It would be selfishness to refuse him ; it would be selfishness to bestow myself on him. I am quite incapable of deciding where my duty lies. Oh, to whom can I look for guidance in this terrible ordeal ?”

With her head bent low, her hands clasped about her brow, she stood the picture of despair. She was as a child lost in a desert, that knows not which way to turn.

“To me,” he exclaimed ; “to him you would have trusted to decide the serious questions of your life. Take him ; it is my wish ; it is my advice to you.”

“Hush, George ! Do not seek to coerce her ; a marriage from gratitude can but bring unhappi-

ness. I would do wrong to accept it, though she did consent. No; we were made for friends—brother and sister, not lovers; such would be against nature a woeful wrong. Maude knows the deep regard I have for her; she may trust me in the hour of need. There let the matter rest.”

“As you will, so let it be. But, Maude, do not give your final answer to-day, nor to-morrow, not even within the year to come. Try to bring yourself to thinking of him favorably and ponder long before you make up your mind. Surely you cannot help esteeming such a man as Wright.”

“Indeed I do esteem Mr. Hood most highly, but—well, esteem is not love. It seems to me as if I never could think of him as other than a brother.”

She had plucked a rose from her bosom and was tearing off its petals one by one. Her head was still bowed low upon her breast; a tear-drop glistened on her cheek.

They soon started to return, following along the path in the direction of the house, pursuing their way in silence, Maude walking between the two men, deeply thoughtful, never lifting her eyes from the ground. Such a tumult of different emotions stirred their breasts they could not speak. Bound together by infrangible bonds, it



seemed as if a thousand different causes in the world were combining to tear them apart ; and their sufferings were intense.

As they came upon the level they could see the guests at the end of the grove. All at once a strange dread of meeting people came over Hood, and, quietly dropping behind, in a moment he paused and began to interest himself in a huge caterpillar that was creeping along the ground. Presently he turned and stole away by the same path they had come, taking at some distance a narrow ill-defined track that led into the densest part of the wood.

He was debating in his mind whether he should take his final departure thus unceremoniously or go through the usual forms in accordance with the requirements of good society. He proceeded a considerable distance, and then he flung himself upon a bit of inclining ground beneath a tall pine tree.

"What had happened? Some miserable money trouble, most likely. Possibly Anna had been scheming ; probably Paul had gotten into another scrape. Without doubt, a matter that he could adjust himself, simply by signing his name to a bit of a rag. Hood poured forth a volume of expletives. He had an income that three times

exceeded his greatest needs, and a fitting disposal of the same was forever involving perplexities ; since the surplus he could not apply to modifying the wants of honest people, for the reason that honesty and certain sensitive notions in regard to cause and effect always travel hand in hand ; and to mete it out to beggars, or to use it for procuring adulation in the common market was not of his philosophy. He was furious that such a thing had occurred, he would let no opportunity pass him by that might lead to the unravelling of this mystery.

The evening shadows were beginning to gather amidst the dense foliage, but he did not perceive it. He was wrapped in the deepest thought. A pair of curious squirrels were keeping up a lively chatter in the branches ; he did not hear them. There came, all at once, a crackling of twigs at one side, but he did not stir. All at once he raised his eyes ; he saw the tall form of a young woman standing before him ; he sprang to his feet.

“What are you doing here, Clarisse ?” he exclaimed.

CHAPTER X.

RETROSPECTION.

"I have a problem for you, Wright, which it may puzzle you to solve."

Kernochan and Hood had returned to the city together that evening. Hood had not forgotten his manners after all, but had sought out his hostess at last and paid his respects to her, withdrawing with all due grace. Meeting at the station, they had found it agreeable to travel in company ; but on the journey Hood had sunken into a silence that must have been infectious, for somehow his friend became equally devoted to his own thoughts and not at all disposed to be communicative—an unheard of condition on the part of Kilman Kon. These were about the first words that had passed between the two since they had left the manor.

"Do you remember," Kilman pursued, in no way dismayed by Hood's discouraging tone, "do you remember a certain fair young singer who, last winter at Paris, took leading parts in the

opera, and whose reputation for unapproachableness extended even beyond the city limits; the same one by whom, perhaps, you may recall Count Ramonouskey came near losing his eyes, through his reckless presumption in this self-same direction."

Hood had a faint recollection of something of the sort.

"Well, what I wish to know is how she came to be roaming about the Bourondeen preserves on this particular afternoon?"

"It was merely a freak of hers. She happened to be in the neighborhood, and she took a notion to stroll about the place." Hood spoke languidly.

"You saw her, then; it is no news to you." There was a ring of disappointment in Kilman's tone.

"Why, yes; I had a little chat with her."

"It was a strange coincidence. But what is she doing on this side of the water?"

"Humph! What was she born for? Give me an easier one. Westward the course of empire takes its way; perhaps she means to secure an engagement over here; that is, if the humor should so move her."

Hood's careless, mocking air made Kilman

feel uneasy, and, growing silent, he commenced to muse. But presently his musing began to overflow.

"She was an odd spirit that had more whims than there are hours in the day. The care of her must have been too much for her manager, for he has since gone crazy, I understand."

"Well, I don't blame him."

"She has an unpublished history, I believe. The mysterious glamour about her, as I remember, was one of her chief attractions last winter."

"Now that you speak of it, it occurs to me that there were numerous histories given her, which were all discredited in turn."

"The story is that she appeared before the impresario one day and sang to him, and he was so well satisfied with her, that he engaged her at once; and that ended the matter. Now I understand that she is generally sought after by all the managers; for her oddities suffice in themselves to draw, apart from her voice, which is little above middling. But at present she sings or not, pretty much as it happens to take her fancy."

"Pretty much!"

Kilman was feeling convinced that there were gems of more or less value hidden beneath Hood's cold, impassive surface, but, finding that his

pumping brought forth nothing of any interest, he gave up in disgust at last and relapsed into the most profound silence.

They had chosen to dine at a restaurant close by the depot, and were seated in a quiet corner with no one near at hand to overhear, for it was after the crowded hour. The wind was blowing in at the window fresh and cool, even balmy, as if the panting, sweating city had not entirely robbed it of its life. Only now and then some one would pass along the street. It was almost deserted in that early evening.

The dinner was a light one, for they had partaken more or less of the refreshments of the afternoon ; they had come there more as a matter of form than from any real inclination. Soon they left the table and for a time they loitered in the vestibule of the building, but they were growing most tired of each other's company. Presently Kernochan remarked that he had some letters to write, and believed that he would go to his room, and Hood also concluded that he had some letters to write, but thought he would stay there and compose them. In a moment more, the latter was left to himself, and, after remaining with his cigar for a while, he went into the office, and,

finding a quiet place, he set to work with pen and paper.

It did not take Hood long to finish his letter, whatever may have been its importance. When he had dispatched it he went and sat before an open window that commanded a good view of the street, in a retired corner where there was little likelihood of anyone coming to disturb him. This he preferred, in his present state of mind, to going to his club where he would be sure to encounter some troublesome acquaintance, or to his own deserted chambers where the loneliness was certain to depress him. Though he shrunk from meeting anyone, he dreaded solitude none the less. It was but a few moments before the world, in which he was, ceased to be an existence to him. What he saw strangely distinct held him as by a spell ; the past was all at once again the present ; in his reverie floated before him many misty images that long since had stolen from his recollections ; these came and went, but there was one form that seemed to have breath and life : " Evil though my life has been, I have ever been true to you."

The words kept ringing in his ears, bitterly reproachful. He saw it all once more ; the deserted street, the lights shining faintly through the

drizzle, the pale, pleading face in the shadow, and the tearful eyes. But in an instant all was changed : there stood before him now, a woman—tall, perfect in outline, beautiful in the flesh beyond expression ; and yet upon that face, firmly chiseled, that betrayed no lowly origin, was written in indelible lineaments the record of deep and terrible passion.

She had been true to him. This woman, to whom one titled head had offered marriage ; who might have had silks and jewels in countless numbers for the mere asking ; estates, too, over which to preside, and servants at her will. Fanita, the unapproachable ; she who led men to destruction while she kept them at arm's length, the most feared yet the most sought after of her company, whose tongue was poisonous as the serpent's, who could kill a human being as she crushed a fly, who hesitated for nothing that her humor bid. This, then, was his punishment.

But it was not all : his dearest friend should not be spared.

“ You would have married me had I asked it of you. But no ; I cared too much for you. I never would have troubled you, and yet he took you from me. I said not a word to make you stay ; but even then I vowed that I would be

avenged on him. Now has my time come ; he shall not marry as he choseth ; I alone shall bear his name ; he shall marry me, but he shall not possess me ; here will I establish myself and live, and the world shall say she is the unwed wife of George Bourondeen."

She had a fortune now : how she had obtained it Heaven only knew. Inherited, she said—a miserly old uncle who had sent her forth to beg. It mattered not how ; it only rendered her the more dangerous. None the less he might save his friend ; he might save from a life-long sorrow her whom he held dearer to him than his own life. But such an alternative :

"Do you care to relieve Mr. George Bourondeen of the responsibility of lifting me to your own level—of introducing to good society a common singer of indifferent talent ? A mountebank, a charlatan, the world will say." It was the blood of royalty mocking him ; she who was descended of a king, who could have had, far better than he, spoke thus to him. What was her meaning ? Did she hope to win him back to her ? Once she had held him by a bond that he, by himself, never could have broken. Not yet were her powers in any way enfeebled—he shuddered when he thought of what might be.

Well, Maude should not be made to suffer for the wrongs he had committed. Already he had sent word to her that he had found a remedy ; and now what was to be done ? Certainly, if it were possible to avert such a catastrophe, George, with his knowledge of the law, and his experience, would discover the means—in all probability there could be no alternative.

No alternative but the one. And what was he ? A worthless being at best, so he reasoned ; one who had bid everything that was good in life to his own enjoyment and given nothing in return—a mere predatory existence. Better a thousand such as he should be destroyed than a single one such as his friend. The man could bear any pain without flinching, but he could not look upon the suffering of these two young hearts and rest content so long as it lay within his power to save them. He had sworn to be their friend ; if there was no remedy then he plainly saw his duty ; his doom was sealed.

Then Kernochan's mocking tone came ringing in his ears like a death knell—so would every man revile him. A delinquent, a deserter, a monstrous reversion of nature, one unfit to associate with his own kind, who chose vice and corruption to purity and respectability, who lived but to gratify the in-

ordinate desires of the material being. Bravery he had, but not brazen faced audacity ; never could he endure to meet the scornful glances of his fellow-men. Henceforward he would be an outcast that every urchin upon the street might hoot at to his heart's relief ; those who were glad to bow to him now would know him no more. Well, the germ of iniquity had found origin with him ; and instead of suppressing the young shoot at its birth he had fostered it until now he himself was entangled inextricably in the luxuriant growth. Perhaps justice demanded him as its first victim ; anyway, it were better thus than otherwise.

CHAPTER XI.

WITHOUT A COMPASS.

Successful as had been the gathering at the Bourondeen's that beautiful June afternoon, it had proved but a painful travesty to those who should have felt most honored for the giving. Maude and George with times' elapse had found their joy, ere-while a golden dream that threatened no surcease, turned suddenly to bitterness enough. Truly, it seemed as if the pitiless fates had chosen to vent their spleen in causing, at the proudest of moments, a sad termination to the hopes of these unwitting ones.

It had been less trying had they separated for the last time immediately after that fated moment. This George well knew, but he had arranged to escort Maude back to the city and there was no convenient way to avoid so doing. Both wished to escape from company, and accordingly, by mutual consent, they decided to return as soon as there came an opportunity. Presently, stealing away, they went to Mrs. Bou-

rondeen's apartment, wishing to see his mother for the last time, though determined not to acquaint her with their final resolution then. The room was vacant, but out on a little balcony they found her, seated in her wheel-chair, where she had been moved, at her own request, by an attendant.

It was his mother's favorite resting place during the long days of summer, and many a quiet evening had been spent sitting beside her there. To the man they were the dearest recollections : through the most trying moments of his life, the recalling of her sweet countenance, seamed with the marks of constant suffering, always had determined him in the right. By her side there, through the solemn twilight hours, many noble resolutions had been made, inspired, as they were, by the sweet communion with her pure and noble nature. Yes, as he stepped out upon that sacred niche and beheld his mother there, he thanked God that he had the strength to make this sacrifice for her.

"My blessings be upon you, my children," she said, as they were leaving ; "may God grant that your days of happiness be long, and may you ever be true to one another." The words cut them to the heart, and for hours afterwards rang

in their ears reproachfully. Maude was unable to hold back the tears that flooded to her eyes; but when she entered the dressing room to get her things she was calm. It was a strong will this little woman possessed, and it was standing her in good stead now towards keeping up her courage. It was all for the best; she would be firm through all.

"How I have learned to love your mother," Maude whispered to George after they were seated in the carriage on the way to the train.

"And she loves you as well," he said in return. "It is the saddest part of all to think of her sorrow in losing you."

It was a quick journey to them who dreaded so deeply its termination. They did not go directly to Maude's home, but, taking a carriage, they drove to the park, and here alighting, they wandered for a time along its winding paths. They seated themselves at last in the shadow and remained long without speaking, happy in that existence which true affection only knows, not daring to think of the end that was so rapidly approaching.

Better had they never come; and George had determined to take her directly to her home, but at the last moment he had thrown resolve to the

winds. The time came, however, when he should act, and then he rose reluctantly indeed, yet firmly. But she was hesitating at the last. He took her hands in his and, lifting her gently to her feet, he led her to the carriage that was awaiting them.

Since their arrival in New York, Maude had been living with a worthy lady,—a connection of hers by marriage, having been the wife of an uncle who long ago had passed away. Left by her husband with no property but the house in which they had lived together for so many years, which had first been secured to them and gradually paid for out of his hard-earned savings, Mrs. Lovering, to maintain herself, was constrained to take lodgers. In a quiet way, however; only a few very respectable and inoffensive bachelors; on no account would she admit ladies, they were always so “perquisitive,” she held. These creatures—always of a mild type—occupied their apartments during the sunless hours, coming in the darkness of the night, and again stealing forth through the morning-tide. Seldom were they seen by anyone except when the day of reckoning came round. She was an easy-going woman, with a tender heart; always ready to give when she had anything; not inclined to be extravagant, but not

grasping the full significance of money. Consequently, when arrears of taxes were announced or when those fiends in human shape, the bill collectors, came round, sometimes she would be in despair. Still, through all those years, she had contrived to make the two ends meet, and faithfully she had clung to the old house where were many happy reminders of the time when husband and children had been hers, now all passed away.

Notwithstanding Mrs. Lovering's straitened circumstances, she had not hesitated to write to this orphan niece of her husband's upon hearing of the father's death, and offer her her home. It had been a fortunate and unexpected occurrence to Maude who had not known where to turn in her luckless plight, and she appreciated the kindness fully. Yet, in accepting her aunt's offer she had no intention of making herself a burden upon her household ; only did she seek an asylum where she might rest until she might look about her and see what it was best for her to do.

It was a terrible moment when these two young people had to part.

"You do not doubt my love for you," George said ; and she answered :

"No ; I place the deepest trust in you ; I feel that it must be for the best, else you would not ask of me this sacrifice. You may always remember that my first thought was for you, that my best wishes will always be for you."

"Though any future act of mine may seem to belie the words I have given you ?"

"Though you should seem steeped in crime, I still will believe you innocent at heart."

"Thank God, thank God ! Do not forget what you have promised, Maude."

He caught her in his arms and pressed a kiss upon her brow ; he gently pushed her from him, and, turning, hurried from the house. It seemed as if his material forces were refusing to carry him away, and he did not once dare to look back, lest, at the last moment, he should fail in his resolve.

Maude threw herself upon her bed in the darkness of her room at last. All was over now and she could weep without restraint. Her brain was in a whirl. Her thoughts were fragmentary recollections. Through her mind floated a cloud of hideous images, rising out of her distracted heart like smoke from burning embers. A tumult of different impulses were prompting her with strange persistence, now here, now there. Where

did her duty lie? What choice was right? Alas, there was too much bitterness which ever way she looked. How could she decide? She must cast herself upon the flood of fatality and be drifted whither it willed.

She wearied of weeping soon. She seldom wept. At last she sprang from her bed, and, going to the open window in the darkness, she knelt upon the floor, and, with her head supported on her hands, leaning against the casement, she lifted her tearful eyes into the calm and peaceful starlit heavens. Oh, that she could find rest for her torn bosom there! Her whole heart was for the one she loved; she would not picture him despondent, but deemed him content, if he had chosen for the right. She had not besought a confidence in his—in their misfortune; only had she begged him to say that, after all, time might bring release from his inthrallment. But when he had answered that no release could be, then had she said no more, not even promised him to comply in that he most desired of her—only gently checked him in his pleading.

Truly, here was a question that made her shudder at the very thought of it. Could worldly interests so deeply weigh upon weak nature, as to counterpoise the sense of right. If what was,

was indeed inevitable, then George, in his kind-heartedness, would feel far more content were she at ease in the world. But the thought provoked her, and she drove it from her mind with an angry exclamation. Then came a new notion swiftly upon the old ; never could she have such a love again. This her heart told to her ; yet, was it not within her power to make happy the life of him she esteemed as a man having many noble traits of character ? Was it not even her duty, if it were apparent to her mind that such lay within her power ? George had answered the question for her. He to whom it should have been her right to turn in the hour of need ; whose word to her should have been above her own. She dared not answer for herself. She rose to her feet, and, lighting the gas, quickly she began to write.

“I know not what to say, to whom to turn in this hour of affliction. George has gone from me forever. I am alone, a helpless, friendless woman in this great cruel world. To you shall I then address myself, you whom I regard with the deepest feeling of respect ?—Yes ; to you. What I said in that terrible moment I cannot recall now, my mind was stupefied by the blow which had been dealt me. I spoke but mechanically

then ; now, that I may pause to think, it is but little better. I am torn to shreds with my own thoughts ; my inclination bids me here, my wishes there, my duty—Oh, but it is terrible that one should be tried thus ! George wants me to become your wife ; he would be better content were I to become yours. Yet here I pause, for this I cannot decide for myself. It is a position most awkward, for it is a position that must bring reproach upon a woman ; but, of this I care not, if I can feel confident that self-interest has not prompted me to yield. But this, some one must answer more strong than I—and the voice of the world will say shame ; she sacrificed him to better her lot on earth. You would not believe this of me ; you would not have cared for me, if you had thought it possible. No ; your feeling for me is of a higher order than mere passion. So I weigh right and wrong, and my affections and dislikes, and nothing but bewilderment comes of it. You are stronger than I ; you must think for me and advise. I will put my trust in you, and your answer I will abide by.”

She read this letter over and re-read it. All at once, with the passion of despair, she tore it into bits, and hastily flung the pieces from her, one by one. With her hands clasped about her head, she

paced the floor wildly, as one whose mind has gone astray. Presently she gathered together the fragments of the letter and tried to put them together once more, working in an abstracted way. While she was thus occupied, her aunt entered the room.

"Child, what is the matter? You look so pale; you have been crying."

Maude went to her aunt, and putting her head upon her shoulder began to sob.

"I am so glad you have come to me. I must tell you. He has asked me to release him."

Mrs. Lovering put her arms about Maude's waist and half supported her. This was a painful surprise, not so much because she thought of Maude's loss, but because she had learned to like George, and had put her trust in him.

"His family have been using their influence, then, to make him give you up, I suppose. But, never mind, perhaps it is as well; men are so weak nowadays!"

"No, no, aunt; he asked it of me because he is strong. Something has happened that he must answer for. He gives me up because there are circumstances that will it beyond his control."

"All is for the best, child; it is God's will. You must take courage; you are young and

strong, and soon can recover from the shock. Perhaps you may live to see the day you can thank your stars for the escape. But here is a note that was just left at the door ; I came to bring it to you. After all, it may give some explanation for such strange action."

Maude caught the letter in her hand ; she recognized Hood's writing upon the envelope ; quickly she broke the seal and read :

"Do not despair Maude ; all will yet be well between you and George. I have already found a clew to his misfortune, and the remedy is near at hand. May your lives be long and happy, and may you, through every trial, be faithful to the love, which, I trust, is the strongest and truest. In the future you shall be ever foremost in my thoughts, as the one being who made me wish for something better than I was. Let me plead for one thing, dear child ; should you ever, as time glides on, hear cruel things said about me, promise me that you will still think the best of me. Believe me, Maude, your dearest friend and brother,

WRIGHT."

He has found the clew to the mystery ; the remedy is near at hand ; all may be well yet.

He will save George. How could she thank him for this. His kindness should be her life-long remembrance. But her future happiness meant his despair. What pain to think of his sacrifice. How true he was to her, how noble, how kind ; here, indeed, was unselfishness. Oh, that she had two lives to give ! She re-read the note hastily as she stood beside her aunt. She should be ever foremost in his mind. How sweet to think she had inspired him to better things. No ; she would never believe any wrong spoken ; she always would think the best of him. Her poor, torn heart was wrung again between joy in the thought of her gain and sorrow for him. The remembrance of his kind and enduring nature caused the tears to flow another time. With a sigh she threw herself upon her aunt's shoulder and began to sob once more.

CHAPTER XII.

NIGHT AND DARKNESS.

So Kilman Kernochan Kon went straightway to his hotel and to his more particular bed-chamber, and sat down before the open window. Not only did he repose himself before his open window, but, what is more, he lifted his deep blue dreamy eyes to Heaven and gazed long into its starry depths. Now astronomy was Kilman's especial abhorrence, for it involved night air and miasmas, with stiff necks, rheumatisms, and a thousand other human ills traceable thereto. It was only through sundry beguilements by a certain irresistible nymph, with eyes as bright as any star on high, that he had succeeded in accumulating a few crumbs of knowledge concerning the stellar universe, by which to disguise his ignorance, so that he might pass muster before the none too impartial eye of the Social Censor.

But to-night Kilman had actually chosen to seat himself in a draught and lift his eyes far beyond the vulgar hebitude of earthly contact.

Plainly, such an unheard of act proclaimed some inwardness gone wrong with Kilman. It was little more than an hour; however, that he remained thus, for Nature never could have suffered such an abnormal state to last a greater length of time. He rose at last and, shuddering painfully, closed the window. He stretched his limbs and worked his head upon its socket in order to make sure that the limberness of his joints, or the usual flexibility of his neck, had in no way been impaired by the action of the damp which impregnated the darkness; then he fumbled his way across the chamber most cautiously in the gloom and rang the bell for Briggs.

Briggs was Kilman's valet de chambre. Briggs' duties, though not deeply arduous, were plentiful. On week days, when the pointers of the clocks were indicating the immediate neighborhood of one quarter to nine, and on Sundays the tenth hour, it was needful that the matutinal slippers should be waiting by the side of the placid couch for the insertion of his Indolency's toes; then the dressing-gown should be attending in suite; and when the hour hand had progressed through one quadrant of the dial's face the shaving water, brought to a proper temperature by the careful application of alcohol and

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mercury, should be upon the stand giving forth the due amount of steam that vouched for the valet's skillfulness. It was a memorable fact that on one occasion Briggs had been discharged because the steam, generated from the shaving mug, had not shown a satisfactory consistency. But Kilman's beard, after this, might have grown down into his lap in consequence of his not being able to secure a suitable carrying out of the necessary tonsorial arrangements; so Briggs had finally been taken to his bosom again, though not until after many melancholy attempts had been made to do without him. It had even been suggested that Kilman's subsequent trip to Europe had had for its main object the procuring of a more competent servant; anyway, it was Briggs' success in this one particular that enabled him to exert a little tyranny over his master, and no one was more aware of the same than Briggs himself.

The master, dressed and ready to meet the day, the room was left to the tender mercies of the chamber-maid. Briggs disappeared and was heard of no more till his master's bell summoned him to his post of duty. On the other hand, Kilman appeared. First he appeared at his club at his own particular breakfast table; and following this there

resulted, in the reading-room, a partial eclipse, through the intervention of the morning paper, that in due time passed away. After which second appearance—well, Kilman had habits and they were more or less of a responsibility. Twelve o'clock noon saw his appearance at a certain broker's office, near the exchange, and here he convened (Kilman was a host in himself) before the ticker, and for the space of fifteen minutes listened most attentively to that instrument's magnetic oratory. It was not on account of any interests at stake that this host assembled thus,—it never speculated, not even mildly and occasionally gambled,—but because it was a habit, long since contracted, before crystallization. After which habit had been, he would turn to the House and venture a suggestion or two, and offer some scraps of wisdom carefully selected from his foresight; and then, together with the House, he would take himself to a particular corner in a certain establishment where an especial green decanter was seriously awaiting their appearance.

So through the day came one appearance after another, according to the time, season, conditions of the weather, general temporal adaptability—all in logical sequence.

As has already been stated, Mr. Kilman Kon rang

the bell for Briggs. It was just five minutes of ten ; wanting one hour and five fractions of the usual time. But Briggs was equal to any emergency, and, consequently, after the consumption of such an amount of time as is needful to produce visibility out of inexistence, by means of an electric annunciator, Briggs appeared.

"My slippers, Briggs," Kilman said, after the instrument had fulfilled one more portion of its destiny and restored his valet to him.

"Slippers at ten?" evidently something was wrong with his charge, so thought Briggs. "Dressing-gown as well?" he ventured, by way of trying the nature of the ground on which he stood.

"Have you been drinking to-night, Briggs?" Kilman said sharply in reply.

"No, sir. That is, not more than was good for me."

"Then why do you ask such a question ? Dressing-gown with slippers always."

Kilman began to occupy himself with the laces of his shoe, for the taking off of his shoes he never intrusted to his valet. It was unmanly. Every gentleman removed his own shoes unless in some way he was incapacitated. First one shoe was removed, then the other, then the slippers were put on and Kilman rose to his feet.

Here the perfect-fitting Prince Albert was replaced by the more easy-going *négligé* and the first stage in the passage from a tailor-made man to a haberdasher's ghost was accomplished.

But simultaneously with the transfiguration, Kilman heaved a sigh ; and, when it was completed, he passed to the window and, raising the sash, leaned his head against the casement and lifted his eyes once more to Heaven—then Kilman sighed again. Surely his master had grown mad, Briggs concluded, and he busied himself with the numerous vessels upon the wash-stand, in the hope of diverting the man's sudden lunacy by the clatter of crockery.

“By the footsteps of St. Christopher, I am enthralled at last !” Kilman exclaimed, turning from the window.

Briggs dropped the tooth-mug upon the floor.
“No, master ; it cannot be !”

“The mischievous boy has entrapped me at last.”

“Lord preserve us ! and you so circumspect.”

“Yes ; I am in love.”

“Oh !”

Briggs was relieved. A vision of granite walls and iron bars had been excited in his brain.

“Gone, body and soul, mind, heart, and corpo-

reity, prudence, courage, and unimpressibility ; gone, coolness and sobriety, serenity and independence—all gone ! ”

“ Impossible ! ”

“ Too true ; I have offered myself and I have been accepted. It must have been a momentary madness that prompted me to such an act.”

“ Love makes madness master, so they say.”

“ Love makes madness ; fools make love.”

“ Which is reasoning in a circle—dust makes men, men make dust. All reason turns upon some orbit and at last comes stumbling and groping back to the point of beginning. The compass has not yet been contrived that shall guide the mariner across the infinite ocean of knowledge to the undiscovered country beyond ; hence weak humanity, bound by its own impotency, hovers timidly near shore, not daring to venture out of sight of land lest it be lost.”

“ But what have you to say of love ? Love is not reason.”

“ No ; love is the orbit on which humanity whirls troubling round. It is the tire to the wheel of life that binds together the spokes and felloes of our aberrant emotions, and keeps us from flying to pieces upon the gulf of Time. When love is lost all good is lost.”

“Since you speak so wisely, tell me why is it that men will ever launch their ships upon the sea, though knowing that in its storms they must be wrecked at last. Why have I ventured to embark on a tempestuous ocean when in my mind the knowledge of its dangers has been always most apparent?”

“What makes the water flow into the sea? What makes the smoke rise to the sky? What makes the fire burn? ’Tis to fulfill the nature of their destinies; to live is to act; ’tis hope that keeps the flame alight by stirring up our passions, else would the accumulating ashes of burned-up existence choke out the fitful breath.”

“Where did you get your wisdom, Briggs?”

“Of much reading, sir. The creations of many minds, I make bricks for my own castle building.”

“The trip hammer is a mighty instrument in the hands of a skillful operator, but a child must bring disaster meddling with its levers. Leave books alone; ’tis my advice; knowledge is dangerous even to the wisest of men. You may leave me now, Briggs.”

“At your command, sir.”

Kilman Kernochan Kon, most phlegmatic of men, known of all his acquaintances as one confirmed in habits gradually evolved out of a long

practiced celibacy; by nature retiring, having few desires beyond the most simple needs of modern humanity; of an intellect too limited to discover any failing in his own construction; happily contented with what nature had bestowed upon him—he, through thirty-five good years, having passed the ordeal of interested femininity, being comfortably equipped in so far as this world's goods are concerned, having enough left over for two—he, though in no way desirous of any change in his own earthly affairs, none the less after all this elapse of time, had at last succumbed to the tender passion. Yes, Kilman was in love; not mildly and practically and commonsensibly, as becoming a man of his years and experience, but madly, head-over-heelsably, life, heart, soul and body laid-downably, in the manner of a rattle-brained Romeo.

Since Kilman had been thus affected, he could not keep away from the window. The night's cool influence was needful to the soothing of his fevered brow; in the secret alchemy of the stars he must seek relief, lest nature in its unsatisfied state be overwhelmed by the profundity of its passion. Yes; all was recklessness now. No longer did horror of death's dread emissaries, floating upon the night air, deter him. No longer did

he fear the draught's rheumatic breath. For love all is ventured ; ah, what little is the gain !

“Dear Cornelia, sweet Cornelia, how the hours drag that hold us thus apart ! O but once more to hear those words from thy red lips ! O but once more to see the tell-tale flush upon thy cheeks, and press that burning cheek unto my own ! O precious heart ! O soul as true as day ! O life and love ! And art thou even now so lonely gazing upon the starlit Heavens ! and do I see thy love-lorn countenance reflected in the placid night ? Yes, sweet imagery, it is thee, but yet I cannot clasp thee. Fie, treacherous fancy, you but tempt me in my madness to hurl myself to death ! Long, long, and dreary night ! deep furious passion ! Will the day ever come again ? and can I bear till then these fearful throes within my breast ?

The south wind was floating softly over the city, and cooling the vast granite honey-comb that the day's hot sun had beaten down upon relentlessly ; softly it floated into the window, and lifted the curtains gently, filling them like the sails of a vessel upon the deep ; softly it fanned the man's hot cheek. At last, stealing beneath the dressing-gown's loose folds, it caused through the whole habitation a sudden rigor.

The window that, once before, had been closed and once again opened hurriedly, was still another time lowered—this time hastily and with a bang ; in an instant more the darkness of the night was suffused with the bright glow of the gas-jet.

“Hang it all, this will be my death! What could I have been thinking of, to go and offer myself to that girl? I will have to begin life all over again, train the servants anew, invent some other method of making my bed, alter my habits so as to make them conform to the practices of married existence ; and then, when I have arrived at a time of life when one is the most anxious to be free from petty disturbances,—then will all the anxieties and vexations of having a family be rife. O this too mortal flesh never can survive it ! never, never, never ! I will be brought to my grave before my time.”

“But Cornelia, lovely Cornelia !”—the gas had been turned down and once more he was at the window ; he did not open it again, however —“sweet Cornelia, precious love, for thee I will brave all ; yes, my regard for thee is deep, I will suffer and be true, I will forget the calm rest of my bachelordom and strive to meet bravely all the tumults and horrors of the wedded state.”

Just then Briggs entered, knocking faintly

upon the door as a matter of form. "A letter, Mr. Kon," he said, delivering the same into that gentleman's hands; "it was just brought here by a messenger."

Kilman took the missive mechanically and his valet retired, leaving the room once more to darkness and to him. But Kilman did not move; the odor of heliotrope was pervading the air about him, yet it had not reached his notice. He was deep in a brown study, held by a train of thought that floated dreamily, indistinctly, through his brain. He had not opened the letter. He had forgotten it as he held it in his hand, but in a moment he became conscious of its presence there, and, lifting it before his eyes, the handwriting attracted his attention. It was unfamiliar, it was peculiar, it was French. Suddenly he broke the seal.

"Everything has been arranged. My lawyer has drawn up all the papers necessary to the contract, and to-morrow evening he will be at my house, holding them in readiness for their execution. I have secured a minister for the occasion, and the French Consul has volunteered his services. At nine o'clock, if you have fulfilled your agreement, the ceremony will be performed.

Whether you will falter in this last act of the drama of your life, now alone remains to be seen. I hope sincerely, for the sake of your brother, that you will not fail in the appointment.

CLARISSE CARLOVAN."

Kilman had glanced over the note hastily. The handwriting was indistinct and he did not form a clear idea of its purport at first. He hastily re-read it, and gradually began to dawn upon him the consciousness of some horrible calamity impending. "Minister? French Consul? Ceremony? Nine o'clock? Clarisse Carlovan?" He summoned up his logic and made a desperate onslaught, digging deeply into the bowels of the note's argument. But, bless you, the more he dug the deeper grew his perplexity.

"By my soul," exclaimed Kilman, "does she take me for a Turk? I would find myself in a pretty dilemma to marry her when there is another lady already waiting to claim that exclusive right. Come in, come in! What is going to happen next?"

Some one had knocked upon the door; it opened slowly, and Mr. Wright Hood walked into the room.

"Welcome, my own primordiate Wright!

Welcome ! Have you encountered any more strange and unforeseen occurrences since we met last ?”

“ Nothing worth mentioning has come across my path since then. I thought I would drop in and see you just for a moment before I went to bed.”

“ A better thought could not have entered your cerebellum.”

“ You are very kind to say that. Since you do not seem to be engaged, I will further impose upon your good nature by taking a seat and finishing my cigar. You do not mind ?”

“ Not at all, Wright, I will join you myself.”

For the space of five minutes these two men sat together, smoking, as if their lives depended upon the issue, neither one uttering a single word, nor looking into the other's face. Wright had winked his eyes one hundred and fifty-nine and one-half times, and Kernochan had coughed twenty-seven times. Wright had changed his position twice, and Kernochan had crossed his legs just twelve times. At last Wright removed the cigar from his mouth, and, rising out of the depths of the very impressionable Turkish lounge

into which he had thrown himself, thus he held forth :

“Kernochan, to tell the truth, I came here to beg a slight favor of you.”

“Ah ; I will be very glad I am sure.”

“Yes ; the fact is—well, I am going to be married, and I want to ask you if you will be my best man.”

“Like the mighty eagle that alone in his glory soars so high, brought down at last by a dart from Cupid’s bow. Wright, I had always flattered myself that some day you might have done me the honor to invite me to that office ; but you see now—well, how soon does the affair come off ? This announcement is very sudden and unexpected.”

“A very hasty affair, I grant you. The thought that some day I might have the honor to assist at your own benediction has always been an unction to my self-love ; but now it seems as if I am to be denied that pleasure. The ceremony will be to-morrow evening at eight o’clock.”

“To-morrow evening !” Kilman, struck by coincidence of time, was forced to exclaim. But he recovered his composure in an instant. “Certainly, Wright, I shall be delighted—that is, if nothing happens in the meantime to prevent.”

"You are not expecting anything, are you?" Hood said, anxiously.

"Oh, no—well, not exactly—no; I know of nothing that can prevent now. I think you may depend upon me."

"You must, Kernochan. I cannot do without you. It is a most urgent case."

"I promise you, Wright, that nothing but incarceration or death shall prevent. Do you care to disclose the lady's name?"

"To you, I do not mind. But between us, it is a secret. I trust you with it because I have faith in your ability to hold it as such."

"I will strive to cultivate that ability, and I hope that you shall never have cause to regret it. But remember, a secret is a dangerous charge; for, as years go by, our organizations undergo great changes, and what we would not do to-day, to-morrow may find us guilty of."

"With you, no fear. Kernochan, I am going to marry Fanita."

"Good God!"

Kilman was speechless; he was overcome.

"Yes; it is no more than right. The misfortune of her early life first drew me to her. I lifted her from poverty and wretchedness and taught her of better things. It was my cruel desertion

of her at last, which forced her to seek a livelihood upon the boards."

"Bless my distracted heart."

"In fact, it is my duty ; I should have striven to keep her from it. While I was kind to her, she was faithful to me. She thought of no evil then, she wished for no other life. Her past, she felt, debarred her from the right to assert herself, and what was offered her she was willing to accept without a murmur."

"Upon my life !"

"What have I done in reward for the best years of her life which she gave to me ? Disowned her ; abandoned her. Now that I have had time to consider coldly, the shame of it all comes upon me. I had congratulated myself for my escape. I never thought of her despair ; of her long hours of dreary waiting ; of her wounded affections ; of her helpless state."

"Stop, Wright ! For Heaven's sake, stop ! That woman is as bold and unscrupulous as ever a woman can be. Her nature is as black and malignant as an infection. Have you suddenly gone mad to make such a resolve as this."

"Alas, no ! I am in my senses. I yield to the decree of fate. Escape is impossible."

"Wherefore this ? Some indiscretion of the

past, I suppose. I always thought that you knew more of her early history than you ever chose to disclose."

"You have never heard the story of her early life, I imagine."

"I very much doubt if I ever heard the true one."

"It is not unlikely. Perhaps the true one may serve to make one or two points more clear to your mind. The period, when it first begins to have a bearing upon the question at hand, must be quite as remote as ten years ago. If I recall the story rightly, it is something like this :

"One stormy evening, about the time I speak, a young Harvard student happened to be prowling through a squalid quarter of Boston. He may have been in search of some sort of grim entertainment ; but whether or no, while passing before a low tenement, in appearance quite as mean as anything that had reached his notice, his attention was attracted by a great outcry, coming apparently from a room just above his head. He paused to assure himself as to the nature of the disturbance, and, becoming satisfied that he detected, amongst other discordant noises, a woman's agonized appeals for help, he was about to enter the building, when a young girl,

who may have been fifteen years of age, came running from within, and, perceiving him there before the door, began calling on him to hasten to the rescue of her mother who was being brutally beaten in a lodging above, by her drunken step-father.

“Now this young student had not then learned that it is always unwise to meddle with matters domestic. How could he have done so, being then so young? But he escaped with life at least; and if he left some of his clothing behind him, or if the talons of an irate termigant retained a few shreds of his more valued epidermis, he congratulated himself none the less. At that time he had a vein of humanity running through him; so, while making his way sadly homeward, he kept turning the subject over in his mind, and, moreover, recollecting the bright eyes and the soft touch of the little fairy maid who had endeavored to console him, and who had assisted in binding up his wounds after his hurriedly leaving the house, at last he concluded that such a den of wild beasts was no place for an uncontaminated kitten to mature in. He pondered and pondered. The end of it was that he contrived to have the poor waif placed in a more wholesome atmosphere—a respectable boarding-school, I think—where

she could receive an education and be properly looked after ; and had himself established as her guardian and advisor.

“The girl’s mother, he discovered, had been a French actress of considerable merit, but one who had fallen into dissolute habits, and at this time was unknown and forgotten. Her father was French, if he was anything. They had been in the country but a short while and were reduced to a condition of the utmost poverty ; he found them only too glad to avail themselves of the conditions he offered. The daughter, from the first, manifested a leaning towards the calling which her mother had followed, and the young man humored her in this regard, very glad to have her pursue a course that might in time relieve him from the responsibility of her support which he had assumed.

“After finishing his college course our friend went abroad intending to spend about a year in travel. Before going he made every arrangement that could secure his protégé a thorough training such as she sought, and left ample funds for her personal needs. So be it, one day about six months later, just after he had reached Paris, while looking over his mail which he found awaiting him at his banker’s there, what should he discover but a

note from this disquiet demoiselle announcing her recent arrival in that city.

“Very much offended at this breach of discipline, he set out to pay her a visit, intending to upbraid her severely. He recollected her as an artless school-girl. He found her a woman grown. For the first time he realized that she was beautiful. Well, instead of using his authority and expressing himself plainly, he relapsed into blank dismay before her, and meekly gave his ear to one of the most impassioned declarations that ever a love-lorn nightingale gave utterance to. In the end he turned from her, infinitely terrified and fled in utter route.”

As soon as he had finished speaking Hood took a match from his pocket and very deliberately lighted his cigar which had gone out. The silence that set in after this grew so oppressive in a few moments that Kilman felt constrained to offer some words of encouragement in order to induce his friend to continue the narrative.

“Does the story end here?” he said, at last.

“The rest is a blank ; an unsolved chaos.”

“Am I to understand from this which you have told me that, through some misstep of yours in the past Clarisse Carlovan holds you in her power?”

"You are to understand that the spell under the influence of which I have lately fallen is of recent fabrication."

"Whatever it may be, is there no remedy? Remember, Wright, a river that cannot be crossed alone, two men perhaps will bridge with ease; in the life of any one of us there may come a time when the hand of another, proffered in friendship, requiring but little effort, may help one from the mire. Wright, let me be that friend; if you will but confide in me, I know that I can be of assistance at the last moment."

"No use; no use; what is, is, and there is no recourse. The member severed from the trunk never can be reunited. There is no remedy."

Hood sank back in his chair and devoted himself to his cigar again. On the other hand, Kilman rose and paced the floor and stormed. But all to no purpose; reasoning had no effect; threats, curses and warning only caused him to smoke the harder. Hood's notoriously stubborn nature seemed to have reached that pass when the the fire lighted beneath him could not prevail, when life was to be sacrificed to gratify an inherent perverseness. At last Kilman's passion began to wear itself out, and when he had given expression to such verbiage as his mental facul-

ties could supply, and had grown silent from sheer exhaustion, Hood rose to his feet.

"You have promised to be present ; if you do not wish to take it back, then may I expect you ?"

"Since your mind is made up, I must not refuse you, of course ; but do you think it right to ask me to become a partner in such a shameful proceeding ?"

"Not if you put it in that way, certainly. But the hour of need is the time when true friendship is proven. I have asked you because I know of no other whom I can trust."

His visitor was gone, and Kilman stood gazing vacantly upon the door which had just closed behind him.

"Hood marry Fanita ! This is the saddest I have heard in many a day. Ah, well, this is a world of snares and pit-falls. Thank Heaven, I have always contrived to keep myself free from all entanglements. I well remember a lecture Paul once read me upon courage, but Paul has since shown himself to be a fool, therefore I shall consider that it is my own superior wisdom which has proved my salvation. But the letter ? I had almost forgotten that—Fanita marry him, Fanita marry me—which is it ?"

When Hood had mentioned the time of his contemplated marriage, Kilman had made a dash for the letter which he had received, and which, in his despair, he had thrown upon the table. The similarity of time struck him as most peculiar, and it had flashed across his mind that his friend might be able to give him some explanation. But Kilman had learned, through thirty-five years of valuable experience, that it is always unwise to act impulsively, so instead of showing the epistle to Hood he calmly had put it in his pocket, inwardly remarking that he would wait for a convenient opportunity to consider before he took any action in regard to the same. At last the opportunity had arrived, and Kilman chose to avail himself of it. So he began to re-read.

“My lawyer has drawn up all the papers. At nine o'clock, if you have fulfilled your agreement, the ceremony will be performed.”

“The vixen—she means to marry both of us ! What's this ? To George Bourondeen, Esq. Great Heavens ! it is all three of us she is counting upon. How shall we save ourselves from her desperate desires ?”

Now this letter began with the conventional Dear Sir ; no name was written upon the heading. In reading it, Kilman had grown so beside

himself before reaching the end, that he had quite overlooked the name of the person addressed, written beneath the signature, according to the custom of some people. It took some moments for the light of the truth to penetrate his brain ; even then it was not quite clear whether some mistake had been made or not.

“Confound it !” he exclaimed, pausing before the window, after several moments spent in pacing the floor in a vain endeavor to re-adjust his intellectual faculties ; “this load of trouble depresses me ; my brain is in a whirl from too much thought ; I shall not sleep a wink to-night I know, and to-morrow—worse than a wet rag. Dear me, Cornelia will observe my wilted condition and take it all to herself. Such an admission will never do—never, never, never. Cornelia, sweet Cornelia, oh, that you were here to cheer me in my distracted state ! Well, it is no use to worry because things worry one, for that were double worry surely—any over-taxing of the system is injurious to the health, and being so must shorten life, which I intend to avoid, if such be possible. Knock, knock, knock. What now ? There’s no escape. I’m like a dejected anchoret, pursued with the phantom’s irremediable sin. Come in ! come in ! There’s no escape ! George Bouron

deen, honest George Bourondeen, George Bourondeen whom fortune, justly, has smiled upon—George, I am truly delighted. But what strange physical anomaly has moved you to seek out the tents of the unrighteous, when it were more fitting you should be stringing your guitar and singing tuneful madrigals beneath the window of your inamorata ?”

“Kernochan, I have come this evening to ask a favor of you.”

“Yes ! You do me a great honor ; sit down and let us talk about it. Have a cigar ? I am going to finish mine.”

George took a chair, but refused the proffered weed, saying he did not care to smoke. Kilman seated himself near by. He was quite unable to open the conversation ; for, overcome by this last announcement, words failed him. So they remained silent for a few moments, George seemingly turning the matter over in his mind.

“Kernochan,” the other said at last, “I want you to do a small commission for me ; it will not cause you much trouble.”

“I shall be most glad to, George, of course—but to-night certain people have been preying upon my humanity,—my stock in trade is well-nigh exhausted,—and if I should not properly

fulfill that which you desire, you will excuse me, I hope."

"I will trust you notwithstanding, Kernochan. You and my sister Cornelia always have been on the best of terms, I believe."

"Yes, yes, George, I want to tell you—that is—of course—certainly—the best of friends; we have known each other so long."

He had well-nigh blurted out the whole story of his engagement to Cornelia, forgetting, in his excitement, his promise just to keep the affair a secret for a few days; or until a convenient time should arrive, so that the announcement could be made to Anna in a manner sufficiently overcoming. It was so romantic to keep it all to themselves, and then it would be so jolly to see her turn iris-hued with jealousy.

"Sister always liked you," George replied, too much absorbed in his own thoughts to notice Kilman's embarrassment. "Now what I wish you to do for me, I will explain. Since I left home this afternoon there has come a very unexpected change into my life. To be brief, Maude and I have found that we cannot live together and so we have determined to separate."

"George, George, this is some folly that soon may be corrected."

"No, no ; it is final. Let me finish. Now I want you to go to sister the day after to-morrow and break the news to her ; she will advise you about apprising my parents. I am going away without seeing them again, for I have not the heart to face my mother. In all probability, I shall not return for some time to come."

"You are mad, George. This is all some silly lover's quarrel that only needs a mediator to make it up. I always thought you were above such things. But the wisest turn fools when love approaches. Let me be your mediator this time ; let me go to her and say that you forgive her, that you were all in the wrong, that you meant no harm."

"You cannot understand it, Kernochan. Even if you could, I am still unable to explain it to you."

Kilman suddenly bethought himself of the letter which, in another fit of caution on George's arrival, he had folded up and placed in its envelope, and the whole put in his pocket. So he offered it to George to read. George took the letter languidly and removed it from the envelope again. The handwriting in which it was addressed made no impression upon him seemingly, but the context of the enclosure did, certainly.

Glancing over the same quickly, he threw it down and, taking up the envelope once more, examined its address. In an instant he plunged his hand into his own pocket, and removing a letter similar in appearance, he broke the seal.

"Ah, there has been some mistake I see," he said, glancing at Kilman with a sickly smile, and at the same time handing him the second note."

"Dear Kernochan, it was a glad surprise to me, seeing you this afternoon ; there is no one in this whole world whom I could have more wished to meet. Your tender heart I remember of old, and I am in much perplexity ; you must come to me and advise me, for I know not what to do, and one word from you will set me all right. To morrow afternoon I shall be at leisure ; you will not fail me for the sake of old friendship, for the sake of the good old days ; those merry, merry days now gone forever. I know you will not fail ; always you were so true. You cannot forget, surely, your old time friend, Fanita."

It was the last straw, and if nature did not succumb to such a load, it was because habits of proper abstemiousness had rendered Kilman's constitution most healthy and vigorous. Kilman would not have had George read that letter for

the world ; he was dumbfounded at its receipt. It was true that he was acquainted with the lady. He had always been upon the best of terms with Paul, and Paul had always been upon the best of terms with every one worth being acquainted with in Paris ; consequently, nothing was more natural than that he should have come to knowing her more or less familiarly—as for any entanglement, however, his conscience was quite at rest on this score. Moreover, Kilman, just at present, was not in a condition to advise any one, not even an old friend like Miss Carlovan.

So his anger was roused for another time that day. For the first time in many years it came very near getting the better of him. He controlled himself, notwithstanding ; but the effort it cost him was a most severe one. Forced to exert a fearful restraint over himself, he could only smile sickly upon George, who, undergoing a like internal commotion, was equally anxious lest the merest tremor of his voice should throw down the tottering walls of his self-possession. But Kilman was so busy striving to contain himself, that he was altogether unable to untangle the confused mass of thought within his own brain. In consequence George was the first to regain his speech.

"You have read the letter, Kilman?"

"Yes, George; but you will pardon me for having so done, since the letter had no superscription and there was no means of detecting the mistake without having first read it."

"Then you understand all?"

"No! by Heavens I do not! I understand nothing; and the longer I live the less hope there seems to be of my ever understanding. Through the whole day one long series of bewildering problems have been brought for my solution, as if I were an oracle, until my brain has become completely upset. Now, if some one would but assure me that I have not gone raving mad, and am not now confined in a retreat for the deranged, then, through my mind's relief, the possibility of my soon getting there may be several degrees lessened in its immensity."

"That assurance I scarcely feel myself competent to give, since the problem which you offer is one which not one of us has wisdom sufficient to determine. As far as I am concerned, however, I may say that, to all appearances, you show no signs which might suggest the possibility of your not being clothed in your right mind."

"It is a great comfort to hear you say that. I would sooner trust your opinion, in a matter of

this kind, than the opinion of any other with whom I am acquainted. But, George, tell me? Have you decided to leave Maude for this woman?

"Do not ask me, Kernochan! There are circumstances over which I have no control. You will believe me when I tell you that whatever I do, I do coolly, deliberately, for the good of those who are dearer to me than my own life."

"An entanglement, then! Egad, she means to marry us all! George, George, that woman is a wicked, intriguing creature. She is a Jezebel, a virago, an advocate of polyandry. Who knows how many husbands she may have already, when she schemes to wed three all in one night. Oh, if I had not sworn to keep it secret I would tell that, which would make you turn from such an ill-considered purpose. Stay, I will save you, I will save him—all three of us shall be saved from her insidiousness. There is one whom she shall marry, who is none of us; there is one who would marry her the more willingly."

The person whom Kilman had in view may have been Paul. But it is not quite certain as to this.

"Kernochan, you must promise me that you will in no way interfere in this affair. To thwart this woman in her purpose is to render her

the more dangerous. It can but ruin my own life ; it can but wreck the lives of those about me."

"There is no choice?"

"None whatever."

"You wish me to see your sister, then, and explain?"

"Yes ; tell her that between Maude and me, all is at an end ; ask her to be a friend to Maude for my sake. But above all, you must give me your word that you will keep the knowledge of this affair a profound secret."

He sat for a while and then he went away leaving Kilman still begging to be allowed to act as mediator in his behalf. So quiet was his going that this one, in his disturbed condition, did not observe his departure. Kilman was still pacing up and down the room in a state of deep agitation when Briggs entered another time.

"A gentleman down stairs desires to see you, Mr. Kon. I told him plainly that it was much too late for you to receive callers, but he would not be turned away. He says he is from Paris and must speak with you to-night. For the sake of old friendship, he wishes to advise with you."

"Am I a father confessor, Briggs, or a balloon?"

“Do I understand that I am to ask the gentleman that question?”

“Answer it yourself, Briggs. Do I look priest-like, or do I appear inflated?”

“Master, I am no judge of appearances; I am no logician.”

“Answer me, or I will discharge you this instant. I feel like bursting and I fain would know whether there rests piety enough upon my countenance to pass the gates of Heaven. It must be pious looks that makes men seek me out as a repository for their woes.”

“To tell the truth and risk destruction, then, there’s less sign of piety upon your countenance than there is indication of an inward pressure. More like a balloon, for the look in your eye suggests a sudden madness—madness comes of some pressure on the brain. By my faith, I think the angels would all hide their heads beneath their wings were you to enter there, wearing such a wild appearance.”

“Wise Briggs, show the gentleman up. Perchance he will perceive my madness and, making short his visit, care not to come again.”

A moment later a person entered, preceding Briggs who held the door open for him, and then modestly retired. He was a short man, a man of

meagre flesh but substantial frame ; with his head hung down and his glance restless, as if never daring to fix it for a moment on any single object, his appearance seemed to suggest deep inward disquiet. When the door was closed behind the man, he raised his head—something about the black bushy beard and the moss-like eyebrows made Kilman start.

“ Desfous ?”

“ It is I, Mr. Kon ; do you recognize me ?”

“ Hardly. What are you doing here ?”

“ You have heard all ?”

“ Yes.”

“ I have come to confess the truth to you—I have come to surrender myself—I can endure no longer being hunted like a wild beast.”

“ Why do you come to me ? I am not a police officer. You should seek out the proper authorities if you are determined to do thus.”

“ No, Mr. Kon ; but you are a man in whom one must feel confidence ; you are not cruel ; you will tell me what is right. I have not the courage to face the officials. I have not the courage to go at large, seeing in every shadow a detective, in every gleam of light the flash of Heaven’s wrath. No ; I must give myself up, else in madness shall I soon destroy myself.”

“The charges which have been made against you, then, are not unjust?”

“Ay, the worst you have heard of me is but half the truth. It was I who committed the forgeries—none other than I. Dwelling upon the thought for months—even years; reasoning out in my own mind how not one of us lives, except at the expense of others weaker than ourselves; imagining the act no more a crime, save in the detection—at last, driven by the needs of an insatiable nature, I ventured to transgress the laws—those laws which make existence possible. Alas, how blind was I! Making my figures lie in the first attempt, I secured a considerable sum without discovery, and so, rendered more bold by successes, once more, and then once more. But here suspicion, I found, had been aroused against me, and, without further ado, I made my escape; not coming here directly, but remaining in seclusion in Paris until it blew over, and then making my journey by a roundabout way.”

“So you have learned, as every pleasure has its corresponding pain, that crime finds its own retribution. You have escaped the law’s relentless grasp; but, to escape the torture of a troubled conscience, you seek once more the law’s protection. Yes, shame that makes the greatest

cowards heroes, will make the bravest hide themselves in fear."

"Even so ; since the hour when thought first tempted me, not a peaceful moment has been mine. For one left to the mercy of himself there's no escape."

"As the serpent into Eden, it came and robbed you of contentment."

"As the worm in the bud, laid there by some passing disaffection, reason fostered it, and here, day by day, it grew and grew, consuming my better senses till at last, urged by my inward self, beset on every side with merciless temptations, could but yield. Through all I was torn by a thousand different impulses, but the suffering which they have brought me were but a modicum of that which I have since endured. Oh, God, to what a depth of misery have my weakness and ungoverned passions brought me ! No longer have I now the courage to look into the face of my fellow-men ; no longer do I find in any face a friend. I am a stranger here and go about not daring to seek acquaintances, hearing the baying of the hounds of hell afar, knowing they sniff my track and follow swift ; even in my dreams I hear their barks, and see their bloodshot eyes ; and so I wake, and think, and think, and cannot

sleep again. My brain becomes a cauldron. I can but rise and pace the floor, starting at every faintest sound, until the night puts on her sable mantle; then I rush forth into the air and, skulking in the shadow, go from street to street from street to street—from street to street. Ay, but there's no rest even there; the shadow follows me; on every window-pane that cold pale face is imaged; I am mad, mad, mad. Oh, why did they ever let me escape? My God, was it for this that I was born?"

"Desfous, your terrified avowal betokens a than deeper sin that you have spoken of. If it be so, 'twere better to confess it."

"You speak the truth! 'twere better indeed. Let me tell the rest at once. I will strive no longer to conceal the guilty secret in my breast; it is slowly destroying me with an all-consuming fire. Stay; do not shrink from me; 'twas madness drove me to the deed. Hark! did I hear a sound? Is no one listening? Sir, you behold in me, one who has thrown away the right of existence; the mark of Cain is upon me; blood crieth aloud out of the ground for vengeance. I am a murderer."

"Oh, oh, oh! this is indeed most sad. Surely there must have been some provocation?"

"Seek not to excuse the fault; the deed was

done in cold blood. I stood calmly by and watched her while her life ebbed slowly away."

"Of whom do you speak?"

"Of my wife."

"Your wife? She killed herself?"

"Ay, so the world thinks. The world is easily deluded."

"Oh, my God! Why?"

"I wanted her to come with me. She had deserted me for silks and jewels—it was for her that I first sinned. I brought her money when she most needed it. I offered to forget all but she mistrusted me. She would not come."

"Oh, what wretchedness is here disclosed!"

"'Tis done; and now all hope of peace has fled forevermore. No matter where I turn, her form rises sadly before me; I see her looking down with a reproachful gaze; and then I strive to drive the apparition from me, for I know 'tis an illusion. But, alas! no use, no use! There's no escape. I am haunted on all sides with hideous spectres. I cannot live—I fear to die lest spectres far more terrible pursue me through eternity. Good sir, tell me, I pray, what shall I do; tell me quick, for hour by hour I feel my mind is giving way beneath this fearful strain—what shall I do? What shall I do?"

“Alas, I know not how to answer you. I should be no less than an accomplice in your guilt, to conceal this which you have told me—even now to permit you to go from here in peace. But, Desfous, I am well aware that you have suffered great temptation, and that there are circumstances to palliate the crime of this unfortunate deed. I know you have already suffered a fair requital for your sin ; I wish you no harm, and would not for the world have it thought that I was the one who had hunted you down and brought you to justice. Desfous, it is for you to say ; what ever you ask of me I will do willingly. If you are firm in your resolve to surrender yourself to justice, I will do the best I can for you. If you wish to continue as you are, I will shut my eyes and know nothing of what you have told me this night.”

But Desfous was resolved ; he could no longer endure life in his present condition of dread. It soon became plain to Kilman that the consciousness of guilt, and the fear of detection, had preyed upon this one's mind until he had become, in a measure, demented. He quickly perceived that the course which Desfous chose for himself was in truth the only one through which he could hope to find relief. But he had known Desfous

for some time; for it seems that the house in which this one had been employed, Kilman had taken a fatherly interest in during his sojourn abroad, and always had acted as adviser-confidential to the same, as was his way with a certain firm in this city. In consequence, Kilman had met Desfous frequently, and having been attracted by his pleasant manners, and having found in him a vein of sympathy, often had joked with him and exchanged little confidences and really felt a deep friendship for him. Now, Kilman knew that it would make his heart ache to see Desfous committed, and Kilman had no desire to incur any more heartaches than were needful; on which account, after offering such words of comfort as he could construe from his vocabulary, he persuaded the gentleman to leave him for the night, giving him the promise that he would consider his case and see him upon the following day.

He was alone for another time that night, and perceiving it, he summoned Briggs once more.

"Briggs," he said, "if anyone else comes to-night, tell him that I have gone to my father's."

"Won't it do as well to say you are not at home? Everyone understands the double mean-

ing of that statement ; therefore, it will be speaking no untruth."

"It will be no lie ; for I feel the throes of death upon me ; within an hour I shall have reached that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns."

"Heavens, Mr. Kon ! what is the matter ? Let me"—

"There, there, Briggs, retire ; let me hear no more of your disquisitions. You may get to bed ; I shall not need you again to-night."

Briggs, being an obedient servant, not in the least inclined to be meddlesome, withdrew immediately, as was proper ; nor did he withdraw a moment too soon. Scarcely had he interposed the portal between himself and the rooms inside, when, crash—bang—came a tremendous noise from within, and the panels of the door seemed to crack as with some terrible internal strife. Yet Briggs, as if he were deaf, did not start in the least, but went complacently to work about the final task for the day, of putting himself in suitable condition for insertion between the sheets of his humble couch in the most approved lackey fashion.

It was nothing after all. Mr. Kon, in order to hasten the departure of his servant, and at the

same time, to give vent to more or less suppressed emotion, had sent a chair pirouetting across the room at a high rate of speed ; which being done he glanced at his clock—it was half-past one—and the realization of the fact did not seem to improve his temper. He went to the window and looked out, but this did not mend matters much, for after a moment he turned away, uttering a startling imprecation at the same time.

“Not a wink of sleep to-night ; ’tis needless for me to go to bed.” He turned down the gas, and then he flung himself into a voluptuous arm-chair and arranged his feet upon another in a way suited to prolonged meditation. Briggs found him in the morning when the sun was far upon its journey towards the zenith, not dead, but sleeping, breathing profound bassos from the depths of his well-developed lungs.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

Notwithstanding the abbreviation, through the press of friends, of the time commonly adopted for the slumbers of Mr. Kon, at the usual hour, that gentleman set forth from his quarters, and at his club appeared. To a minute the exact amount of time was given to his breakfast and to the ensuing morning paper. But here occurred what seemed the first suggestion that Mr. Kon had in any way been affected by his experiences of the previous day : a friend met him as he was proceeding across the floor to get his mail and spoke of an important event that had occupied several columns of the daily in the description. Mr. Kon, however, much to his chagrin, found that he knew no more of the matter than if it had never been ; and was compelled to exert a considerable degree of tact in order to avoid an uncalled-for display of ignorance.

There were several letters for Mr. Kon, and one was in a lady's hand, and made the somewhat

bedraggled countenance lighten several shades. He took himself into a quiet corner, and then he glanced about the room ; seeing one of the members watching him—can we believe it ?—his color heightened and a look of sheepishness came over him. Hastily he put the letter away and took up another—it was from Hood. But this was uninteresting, only giving such details as would be necessary to his office of best man that evening ; so he put it away, and, finding himself no longer an object of anybody's gaze, he returned to the perusal of his love document. Here let him rest. We have most of us received them and they are all alike,—the same stupid trash ; therefore, it can be no disappointment to learn that this one never has been submitted for publication.

The lines of care deepened on Kilman's countenance as that day passed by. On account of the affairs of his friends, which demanded his closest consideration, he found himself compelled to defer his visit to his lady-love until a later date—perhaps he was glad to have a good excuse for deferring his visit until his appearance should have improved through the absence of anxiety. Be that as it may, Mr. Kon appeared down town at his post, before the usual ticker, on time ; but whether the flurry on 'change, that occurred soon

after, could be traced to his troubled condition, we are not prepared to say. It is gratifying to know, however, that he was able to maintain himself, to all outward appearances at least.

It was Mr. Kon's practice to devote certain hours of the afternoon to casual matters, such as the passage of time brings up. So, at an hour appointed, he met Hood for the purpose of better arranging the affairs of the latter, and also to see if that gentleman could, in any way, make it clear to him how some things could be—some things which had even racked his brain through the hours of slumber.

"Look here, Hood," he exclaimed, rushing in upon that person like a blast of wind from an open door; "will you oblige me by stating how, with our laws as they are, that woman can marry you, and George, and me, all in one evening?"

"Very easily," Hood replied; "by simple arithmetic. She has made an appointment with George at nine o'clock, but, unless there is a previous engagement with you, she will meet me at eight, and the usual form will be gone through with: now, if she is married to me at eight, she will not need to keep the appointment with George at nine. What could be more simple?"

She has played her hand well, and is prepared for any emergency ; she is determined to be married to-night, at any cost.

For exactly one hour and thirty minutes Kilman exerted himself to the best of his ability, in the hope of drawing his friend into a confidence : he pleaded, he threatened, once more he stormed ; but his pleading, that could have moved a post, moved no determination here ; the keen edge of his threats quickly was turned on this insensate adamant ; his storming was as hail upon the roof. When at last he ceased, from sheer exhaustion, he was as wise as when he began,—he was more perturbed than ever he had been in his life before. Seeing that there was nothing to be gained in this direction,—that he was expending his energy in profitless haranguing,—he thought to go to the root of the difficulty by paying a visit to Miss Carlovan, in accordance with her request. So, with this purpose in his mind, he set forth in the direction of that lady's place of abode.

Clarisse, for her sojourn here, had chosen a small, sunny, and comfortable house near one of the squares ; and had put herself under the pro-

tection of a lady of sufficient years and respectability. Her life here had been suitably correct in so far as the world was concerned, for she had, by no act or word, caused any disturbance to its sensibilities. She spent money freely,—she seemed to have quite enough to spend for her own personal gratification,—yet she went to no noticeable extravagances save in the maintenance of a carriage and horses and, more particularly, of a diminutive footman, which was perhaps not quite in keeping with the dimensions of her quarters. But Clarisse had whims, and these needed to be gratified, no matter what the expense might be.

It was but a moment that Kilman had to wait in her parlor before she made her appearance. With a soft step and silken rustle she came, bringing a faint odor of heliotrope, filling the room with her beautiful presence. Perceiving him seated by the window, she paused, and then burst into a silvery laugh that completely enveloped him and thrilled him like tuneful music. Ah, those white teeth, and the smile which so became them; the fair cheek, and that delicate skin; that neck; and then the perfect form outlining faintly beneath the pink vestment that floated about her like a soft cloud. The man rose

quickly to his feet, blushing like a school-boy beneath her glance. Her laughing embarrassed him—which caused her to laugh the more.

"This is not the Parisian Kilman," she said, squeezing his hand just the least little bit. "America has aged you much—no longer light-hearted and merry but care-worn and sad like the rest of your countrymen. Eh, bien! you make life too much of a responsibility, you wear your brains out conjuring impossible schemes, you spend your strength in a worshipful frenzy at the shrine of the money-god—and the end frequently is a contemplation, under confinement, of a profitless past of toil."

Thus she pursued; never pausing for a moment,—as if her breath was limitless,—never permitting Kilman so much as a single word. She seemed in high spirits, overflowing with nervous sprightliness, abounding in merry witticisms. She was so delighted that he had come; she had scarcely expected that he would trouble himself to renew old acquaintances, when he had such a circle of charming people for his friends.

Yes, she was going to be married, so she replied with an irritated toss of her head, when he had suggested hearing of the same, after forcing her at last into giving him the opportunity of

speaking. It was quite time for her to be establishing herself if she ever intended so doing. "An old love?—of course." A uniting after a separation was all the more likely to be enduring ; people better knew then how hard it was to get along without one another.

She had seated herself before him ; she placed her pretty hand on the arm of his chair and looked up into his face with a merry twinkle in her eyes. In that glance he thought of another to whom he had just indicted a letter of ardent passion ; he was alarmed but could not move ; she seemed to hold him by some evil spell. He strove to look brave, but it turned to a decrepit expression which drew forth a melodious laugh once more.

He had ventured into the toils ; how should he make his escape ? He had come there to inveigh against her contemplated action ; his wrath alone had prompted him to risk an encounter ; he had not for a moment dreamt of the likelihood of his own vulnerability. Yet he could not muster up courage enough to mention George's name even ; he would have been glad to have made good his retreat at once, without so much as a single skirmish, without even firing a single wrathful volley, well ammunitioned as he had come.

But she kept him lingering for an hour at least. Her maid brought in a silver tray with glasses and a decanter upon it ; she filled a glass for him and poured out just a sip for herself ; she brought him cigars and then she lolled back in her chair and rolled a cigarette for her own use. There was something in the deft manner in which she rolled it between her fingers that was most effective ; and the way she blew the smoke from her sweet, provoking mouth, was bewitching beyond measure.

They talked of many things ; but she was not disposed to speak about the affair of the evening. They went lightly over the incidents of the old association together ; she showed no wish to forget the past, gladly dwelling on such moments of pleasure as had most impressed themselves upon her mind. But she was more inclined to recall the new life here. She began to like the Americans after all ; though they seemed so cold at first, they were, in truth, quite warm-hearted, she had found ; it was their way of concealing their true feelings—exerting a self guardianship which she was beginning to admire above her own countrymen. Yes, she hoped to make America her home in the future ; she thought she could be quite happy here for the rest of her days.

She had her costumes to show him ; to decide which one to wear had been her perplexity. One by one she had the exquisite problems of her wardrobe brought out, and, holding them before him, she insisted that he should say which one she should choose for the occasion. He had such good taste, she held. He made his escape at last, his brain in a flurry, his conceptions more disjointed than ever.

As he hurried along the street that sultry afternoon, he strove in vain to banish from his thoughts, the remembrance of her ; but the beautiful countenance had burned itself too deeply upon his mind, her bright eyes haunted his recollections, and the mellow ring of her voice kept echoing in his ears. Then he tried to supersede them in his memory by bringing up the thought of her whom he had asked to be his life partner ; he tried to go over all the occurrences of the day previous. But Cornelia, he found himself unable even to remember in appearance ; he knew no more of her than that she was dark, but as to the shape of her face, or whether her mouth was small and woosome, like this one, he could not have told to save himself from destruction. As to his cares, numerous and weighty as they were,

they could not crowd out that fatal image ; they only served to heighten his bewilderment.

He went to his quarters to dress himself for the evening. He was to dine with Hood and then go with him to the house. He had scarcely thrown off his coat of the afternoon when Briggs announced his visitor of the previous evening. (Desfous had been there before that day, and finding Mr. Kon absent, he had lingered for some time about the building, but finally disappeared.) What was to be done with him, Kilman did not know ; too many other matters had required his attention for him to have considered his case that day. He had not forgotten him, but he could not decide hurriedly ; so he directed Briggs to put the man off until the following day, as it was quite impossible to see him until then.

Kilman had set forth that morning with the full determination of accomplishing the salvation of his friend. But, after all, he had returned with nothing done. Now little more than two hours remained and then all would be over. It was like waiting the hour of execution—he was torn with a helpless despair. Ah, if they had only chosen to confide in him all might have yet been well. He was assured of this, however: Fanita held George in her power through the knowledge of

some past imprudence which she was threatening to disclose ; and Hood had determined to save George, or, more likely, to spare Miss Maude the sorrow of losing him, and so had compromised the matter with her by offering himself as a substitute. What a pity to throw himself away in such a manner ! It was just like him, however —always he had been so self-sacrificing.

But could he save his friend by putting himself in his place ? The thought flashed across his mind, and it made him shudder. No, it was too terrible ; he was not capable of such self-abnegation. Still he thought and thought : in the deepening shadows of his room her eyes appeared to be dancing about like will-o'-the-wisps, tempting him on to certain destruction. The yellow light of the sinking sun, stealing in at the casement, seemed to ring with the voice of her wooing. Ah, it was all a mockery. She would let him kneel at her feet, but she had other aspirations ; she would turn from him laughing derisively at the mere thought. No, no, no ; he must not see her after that night. He tried to recall the past, he thought of her as she had been ; but in those days he could not recollect that she had so affected him. Then what could have brought about such a result ? Perhaps he had

steeled himself then against her charms ; perhaps she had not used those eyes as she had done that afternoon. Poor, suffering man, he dressed himself as best he could, venting his ill-humor upon Briggs, relieving himself with the utterance of many and varied imprecations. When the time came it found him already prepared. Immediately he set out.

CHAPTER XIV.

REASON AND IMPULSE.

It is said that the sight of suffering to a sensitive person, can cause, through sympathy, more real pain than is found in the actual experience. Perhaps this is so. Men who have been brought to life, after undergoing what has seemed to the beholders frightful death agonies, tell us they can recall no painful sensations unless they be in the final return to consciousness. With ourselves the faintest abrasion will cause severest pain, whereas a deep wound sometimes is first revealed to the mind by the flow of blood. After all, it is the incidental worries of life which are so hard to bear. Great troubles, be they mental or physical, so soon deaden the senses that we quickly learn to endure, and even might miss them were they to be taken from us. Delays, apprehensions of evil, wounded pride, deferred hope—these are the things that wear away our lives from the intensity of the suffering which they bring. The criminal, who hears his death sentence, experiences a

sense of relief ; the convict in his cell feels more at ease, lives longer, endures far less misery, than he at large, who bears within his breast the consciousness of guilt and knows the possibility of being apprehended.

What Hood's feelings were through the elapse of that last day, it is hard to imagine. He had heard pronounced his death sentence, and without doubt he was far more content than he would have been, had he held concealed within his breast the knowledge that the day was to close, bringing a final separation between the woman whom he had conceived a deep fondness for, and the one whom he knew she had learned to love with the deepest passion—who was her life and happiness. There must have been a grim satisfaction, even a feeling of pleasure, in the thought of saving her this sorrow ; to her eyes, hereafter, he would always be a hero ; though she could not love him, his recollection would be foremost in her mind. Whatever might be his misery in the future, this one remembrance would be always his.

Hood was by no means a sensual man, though he was quite capable of appreciating a pretty face. It was Maude's ingenuousness, and her show of

thoughtfulness in the attendance upon her father during his illness, that had first drawn him towards her. Had she been less fair, he would have liked her none the less ; he would never have thought of her as other than beautiful, though her countenance did violence to every sort of symmetry. She could not have been other than fair, however, for it was her fair soul that gave the pleasing form and expression to her countenance ; there was that inscrutable something there which always wins the heart and never excites a feeling of repulsion in any way whatever.

The day was a busy one to Hood. The morning he spent in writing letters and going over business matters preparatory to a prolonged absence ; for from the first he had resigned himself to his fate, without making a single effort to find a remedy, deeming such to be quite useless, inasmuch as it seemed plain to him that, were there any alternative, George, with his experience in legal matters, would not be slow to discover it. He was determined to travel to some distant country and there to make his home ; he thought it quite likely that he should not return to those shores for many years to come, perhaps never again. It was the renouncing of the old life ; the

hour of leave taking before going into exile ; yet no friends would come to shed tears over his departure, to take him by the hand and express their concern in true words of love.

He was a most proud man, and the contemplation of a fall in the world's esteem was a grief that seemed unbearable. But this was not all. Clarisse held him by a bond that had no limitations. He was to give his life to her ; and what she might choose to order, he must comply with ; there would be no hope even in that doubtful remedy, divorce. Truly, such inthrallment were as the shackling together of two ill-natured animals. Better a hundred times, to be the fettered slave, toiling at the galleys, than in the power of an unscrupulous and revengeful woman whose love is not requited. But there was no choice. Hereafter, his life was to be the bearing out of a slow, unmitigable torture that the grave alone could end.

All his affairs he arranged so that George could the better attend to them for him ; such directions as were necessary, he wrote out, and then he prepared a packet of documents to be turned over to this one after he was gone. To George it would be a labor of love. He could depend on him for the fulfillment of his commis-

sion. So the afternoon came at last. He longed to see Maude for another time, to bid her one last adieu, and tell her how he prayed for her happiness. But no; it could avail nothing, it could but deepen her sorrow, it could but bring her pain. Her happiness was assured, what more could he wish.

He spoke to no one that day of his contemplated departure; he strove to keep up his usual show of quiet indifference while with casual acquaintances of the day. And he succeeded well, for no one seeing him would have thought for a moment that there was in his mind the serious contemplation of a sudden and radical change in his concerns. At last he sought out George in his office. He found him seated by an open window plying himself industriously at a document of formidable appearance that was waiting his signature—careworn he was looking to a deep degree—it was evident that the ordeal of those last hours had aged him several years. They talked together long over his affairs. Hood meant to keep up the illusion until the last, and so pretended not to be aware of the cause of his friend's troubles. George should know nothing until all was over. He would not, for the world, have encountered George's opposition to this plan

of his to circumvent him ; it would have been war to the teeth ; a death struggle for the right, in which one or the other must have succumbed, at last, of sheer exhaustion.

Little dreaming that his release was so near at hand, George talked of the future hopefully, even saying that all might be for the best. He besought Hood to remember Maude and to try and win her ; but if not that, always then to watch after her and be her protector—never to allow her to come to any harm.

It was for Hood a trying moment, but he bore up bravely and at last he made his escape, promising so many things that he knew would never be carried out that he really felt conscience-stricken.

At six o'clock Kernochan came to Hood's room. His depression of spirits was now grown most profound, with the end so near at hand. What at the first had seemed to him as but a trivial jest was soon to become a serious and painful reality ; and he had been so confident all the while, that, with his own intervention, the trouble could easily be averted, even since the time when the bare possibility of the affair coming to pass had first wakened in his mind to its true enormity. In truth, so much confidence had

he felt in his own powers of suggestion that he had not thought to exert himself in any positive direction, not even to map out in his mind some plan of action more substantial than dialectics.

But as he had turned his footsteps toward the house of his principal, all at once had it dawned upon him that he had been made a party to a cowardly and meaningless surrender. The fact that they were going to lay down their arms and give themselves up without so much as a single encounter, came suddenly illuminating the darkness of his mind's perplexity like lightning through the murky blackness of a midnight storm. In that one instant he saw revealed the spectres of the might-have-beens there—a whole army waiting but the voice of his command. But alas ! too late, too late ! Here had he allowed many good and precious hours to pass him by when all through the night volunteers to his service had been pouring in upon him ; and he so blinded by the confidence in his own individual prowess that he had not thought to enroll them to his aid.

“Two and two make four,” so murmured Kilman ; “and four and four make eight, where is my arithmetic ? By my soul ! if Anna Bourondeen has not herself laid the corner-stone of this temple of infamy then I am no longer Kilman

Kon." As he hurried along the street his lips kept moving like an automaton ; absorbed by his numerous thoughts there was no indication of other than a mechanical existence. A friend, seeing him, tried to catch his eye, but unsuccessful, passed him by and went his way with a broad smile on his lips.

Now, why Kilman happened on poor, inoffensive Miss Bourondeen at the start was a woman's reason; that is, it was impulse, not reason at all ; women do not reason, nor any more do most men. It is said that, owing to his psychical differences, the *genus homo* is entitled to a distinct sub-kingdom instead of being vulgarly classified as a mere order of mammalia ; but where to place the line of demarcation,—whether between the one man who has psychical properties and reasons, and the ninety and nine others who have none and think not at all ; or whether between the monkey and the man, the quadrumana and the bimana,—is a question over which doctors disagree, so scientists wisely desist. Certainly, reason is a substance or property with which nature is very niggardly in the distribution thereof ; or at least very partial, awarding it only to a favored few, and this in meagre portions. It is instinct that moves the most of us—instinct evolved out of much burnt

fingers, cracked pates, hunger and other passions—and we instinctive ones are quite unable to see why a single individual should thus be favored, while the rest of us are left to the mercy of our own impulses; we are quite unable to see that we are dependent for our living on this one reason, that without it, it is more than possible we should not be—we are quite ready to cut off this one's head, heedless of consequences, upon the first show of presumption on the part of reason.

Kilman knew that two and two made four; it was a law which had become fixed in his mind, placed there through much skillful trepanning, when his youthful cranium had first been put in charge of the most distinguished preceptors of his day—those who had made it what it was. Yet Kilman had never been so unfortunate as to commit that fatal mistake of inquiring of those worthy beings why two and two made four. The fact was, it never had occurred to him that two and two should ever make anything but four; he was quite willing that they should make four; any person who might have undertaken to prove that they made anything but four, he would have regarded as tiresome and not in the least deserving of his attention. With Kilman it was instinct,—inherited, not original with himself,—he never

reasoned to any great length. So, like a startled animal, in that sudden blast of intelligence, Kilman took the fence. Whether the fence was too high, or his gymnastic powers too low, the future may perhaps determine.

"Can nothing be done?" he exclaimed, breaking in upon Hood at last, breathless from climbing the stairs, wearied with the directing of his unruly impulses, bursting with latest promptings.—No, nothing. There was no remedy. It was altogether useless to burden themselves with considering an impossibility.

"You are a comminated, close-mouthed, burned, unsympathetic fool! Why could you not have confided in me the reason for this resolve? I know Anna is at the bottom of it, and there is Cornelia, she would have discovered a remedy, and save us all this frightful suffering. Oh, but it is terrible! How shall I dare to meet her again!"

He sank into a chair, perspiring at every pore. He leaned his head upon his hands—was that a sob or the catching of his breath? He used his handkerchief freely. Whether those were honest tears or beads of sweat it will not do to say. He appeared a physical wreck that would make but a poor assistant at the evening's ceremony.

Hood went to his side, and smiling slightly, he put his hand upon his friend's shoulder.

"Why, Kernochan, what is ailing you? You seem to take this matter more seriously than I do myself."

"Why shouldn't I? You are nothing but a brute, incapable of any sort of feeling. I half believe that you are in love with that—that creature, and this story of compulsion is all told because you are ashamed to own it."

"No, Kernochan!"

"Then why could you not have told your story to me so that I might have tried to help you?"

"Because it was not mine to tell."

"No; it is all on account of George. You want to save that sweet-faced child from pain; and so you sacrifice yourself."

"Does not the end justify the means?"

"No woman is worth the sacrifices of such a man."

"A woman's worth you cannot measure with a plummet; not determinate is it but possible—a far-reaching influence that moves the earth unconsciously to good or evil. To wreck this fair young person's life, you know not what beautiful conception may miscarry?"

"Oh, would that heaven had gifted me with such rhetoric ; then could I reason you back to your senses. But is it no use, you always could silence me with your villainous arguments."

Hood burst out laughing at this, and, after a moment or two passed in meditation, he suggested that they should dine.

It was through these latter days of bachelordom that Hood had a particular corner in a certain small and unobtrusive, though celebrated establishment, where he was in the habit of taking his meals ; and thither they immediately betook themselves. But Kernochan had no appetite. The choice viands which his friend insisted upon ordering only brought disgust. He nibbled at a piece of bread and turned the chicken over on his plate ; after which he gave his attention to the wine. On the other hand, Hood seemed to have a startlingly increased desire for food.

"How can you be so composed ?" Kilman exclaimed, angrily, after watching him making a clean sweep ; "and such a gormand, too, when these are the last hours of your life ?"

In response Hood smiled, and only said that it was because he wished to preserve his vitality ; if that was in good stock he could endure much without lasting injury. At which an invocation

took form in Kilman's brain, but, owing to the circumstances of his surrounding, he succeeded in passing it off in a suppressed and angry growl.

With their cigars the remembrance of his visitor of the previous evening occurred to Kilman. How it happened he could not say—a fleeting thought, most probably. Anyway, the promise he had given this person came to mind and what to do he did not know. Should he ask Hood for his advice? They had a few moments of leisure left. Perhaps it would be as well.

“Hood,” he said, leaning across the table and speaking in a whisper, “you remember Desfous, the man who, one day, suddenly withdrew himself from public observation, taking with him, unbidden, a considerable sum of money, a part of which you had some interest in I believe?”

Certainly Hood remembered him. The fact did not seem to strike him as important, however.

“It was considered a very skillful operation, as I remember.”

Hood's cigar had more interest for him apparently than did this affair.

“What do you think? He came to my rooms last night to see me.”

“And you had him arrested, of course?”

Hood was examining the decorations of the ceiling.

"No. The fact is I wanted to see you first and ask your advice in regard to him."

"Ah !"

Kilman told the whole story. Described the man's condition of constant dread most vividly. Tried to picture his suffering from the standpoint of a guilty conscience. Was just dipping into the ethics of the matter, when Hood suddenly turned to the table, and leaning across it, exclaimed in an excited whisper :

"Did he say nothing of an accomplice ?"

"No," Kilman answered, much surprised at the change which had come over him. "No ; he spoke as if he had been entirely alone in his crime."

"Then will you please tell me why it occurred to you to couple Anna with this affair ?"

"I am sure that I am quite unable to do so. I only know that Anna is a scheming woman, and always has been at the bottom of everything that has gone wrong in her quarter."

"Kilman, can you find that man ?"

In his excitement Hood had nearly forgotten himself. He perceived that they were being observed, and, beckoning to his friend, they left

the place together. Upon the street he turned and suddenly exclaimed :

“Kernochan, if you can find him it may not be too late yet.”

“What do you mean ?”

“I am unable to explain. Do not stop. Go and seek him while there is yet time.”

Kilman did not pause for further argument, but, catching sight of a cabman in the distance slumbering on his box, he gave a shrill whistle, that brought the latter quickly to his senses. In a moment he was inside the vehicle and Hood was leaning in at the window.

“You will bring him to the house ?”

“If it is possible, Wright. I will be there myself at the appointed time.”

The hack, stimulated by the prospect of a double fare, went rattling up the street at a great pace. So disappeared his best man. Hood stood watching the vehicle until it was lost from sight ; then he turned and walked away.

CHAPTER XV.

DISCORD.

Had George been the victim of a malicious conspiracy? Was he to escape after all? It was seven o'clock, and Hood had still one hour to wait; he sauntered along the street wondering to himself if it could be possible. He tried to link together the motive and the result by some consistent plot, but it were as the piecing together of the torn pages of a letter and reading them; the more he thought the more satisfied he became that an inevitable fate awaited him. He soon grew wearied with walking, for the evening was quite warm; so coming before a hotel, he went in and sat down in front of an open window that looked out upon the street. A melancholy place, surely, for a man to await the hour of his wedding ceremony, but he coveted every moment of his freedom and was glad to remain where he was little likely to be disturbed. Presently he grew restless here, however, and in the hope that Kilman might soon return, he hurried

to the residence of Miss Carlovan. The valet was there, but his master had not yet put in an appearance. Well, it was not likely ; to make the trip would consume the entire time ; anyway, he would fortify himself against hope. He was prepared to meet his fate nobly, and he did not permit himself to think of aught else lest, at the last moment, he should falter.

The sun had disappeared behind the housetops, but, in the western sky, the smoke-charged atmosphere which hung over the city was still lit with a pale and yellow light. The street was almost deserted, only a person now and then upon it, sauntering lazily along. People were beginning to gather upon the doorsteps, and, from time to time, the sound of a voice, or the shrill cry of some urchin calling to his mate, broke the dead silence of the falling night. He studied the deepening shadows on the pavement, and read the passing of the moments as from a dial's face ; he saw happy homes here, he watched little family groups, he heard the prattle of merry children ; and then the picture of his own black future opened up before him. The rattle of wheels in the distance caused his heart to throb madly for a moment—louder it grew, then fainter ; at last the sound died away, and all was still again.

Instinctively he took out his watch ; but with an angry utterance he put it back into his pocket without looking at it. What cared he for the time now ; when they wanted him they would send for him ; he took a turn about the room. There came the sound of wheels upon the street once more, this time louder and louder—they were passing by the house ; he would not look—no ; they had stopped. He sprang to the window—yes ; Kernochan was dismounting ; but he shut the door behind him—was he alone ?—was there some one remaining inside ?

“It is no use, I could not find him. He was not at his lodgings as I had hoped. He was not at my place. I cannot imagine what has become of him.” Kilman was out of breath ; he had not stopped to take any breath since leaving Hood. He had well-nigh driven Jehu distracted with his promises and his impatience. He was all perspiration and despondency. “No use, no use ! But what possible connection could he have with this affair ? How was he to help their case ? Kilman had not waited to inquire before setting out in search of Desfous ; he had striven to find some connection while the hack was proceeding, but had been quite unable to concentrate his mind to the extent of pursuing any lengthy train of

thought. He was now anxious for an explanation.

"If Desfous was alone in his crime, then George had been victimized, and by his own brother, too." So Hood answered.

"You will delay then, until we find him?"

"Not so : it is useless ; I have no faith in your man. He has told the story for some object. He has, without doubt, been befooling you."

Poor despairing man, exhausted by the day's battles, bleeding at his heart, wounded beyond hope of recovery, he sank lifeless into a chair. Ah, what a sad wreck was here ! Overwhelmed with grief, crushed by the ignominy of defeat, burning with an unnatural fire ; his mouth wide open, panting for breath ; his forehead beaded ; his hair saturated with perspiration, straggling wildly ; his eyes deeply circled ; his cheeks tinged with an unusual red ; his collar a rag ; his shirt torn open at the throat ; his waistcoat wandering ; his surcoat a mass of wrinkles—there was little semblance of the once proud, imperturbable Kilman Kon.

Hood passed to the window again and looked out. No hope, no hope ; nothing but a miracle could save him now. Well, it was better than

suspense. He was prepared. He could enact his part without faltering. He had no fear ; he was resigned. The room was dark and the objects about it almost indistinguishable. The clock ticked loudly upon the mantel, and Kilman was still breathing heavily. There came a faint knock upon the door and Briggs entered.

"They are waiting for you, sir."

"Kilman, are you ready?"

"Heavens, no ; I must fix myself."

Briggs, with his usual forethought, had brought an extra collar and other necessary articles, and, with his valuable assistance, Kilman was quickly made presentable.

They were leaving the room together when Briggs took Kilman to one side and breathed something in his ear. Hood left them whispering upon the landing and descended to the foot of the stairs. "If you do not find him, I will discharge you," he heard called out, all at once, in a suppressed voice, and then a dark shadow came thumping down the stairs, and passed Hood by so quickly that it was impossible for him to discover its identity ; the front door slammed and Kilman was at his side whispering excitedly.

"He is here ! Briggs told him to wait outside

for me. Put it off for a few moments, I beg of you."

They remained fully five minutes there in the darkness, but Briggs did not return.

"Come," Hood exclaimed, at last, "I must delay no longer. George will be here presently, and then there will be a scene. Come, I have no faith in your man!"

Reluctantly Kilman followed him. The room was dimly lighted and they saw Clarisse sitting in one corner, while the consul was chatting with her pleasantly—there seemed to be a complete understanding between these two. All the necessary paraphernalia had been ordered and was waiting—a minister, a woman attendant, a lace mantilla, even an attorney—to make the knot more binding. Hood bowed and Kilman tried to look pleasant, but the look quickly twisted itself into a scowl.

Everything was arranged, and they took their respective places. More than once Kilman had gone to the door and looked out, and each time he had returned appearing more careworn and crestfallen than the last. Standing despairingly yet firmly at his post at the last moment, his quick and watchful ear caught the sound of foot-

steps in the hall-way, and suddenly he deserted without further ado. Yes, Desfous had arrived.

"You will swear that you have no accomplice?"

"Before Heaven, I swear that no one aided me in my crime!"

"It is Anna, then?"

Within, the minister was going over the marriage service. Clarisse, ever willful, had chosen to have the ceremony performed according to the rites of the Protestant Episcopal Church. It was George's profession of faith, and it was as binding as another; anyway, she fancied it, and she had no religion herself.

"If any man can show just cause why they may not be lawfully joined together, let him now speak or else hereafter for ever hold his peace."

In the silence of that moment one could have heard a pin drop. Clarisse was looking queenly in her success; her eyes sparkled with a satanic lustre as never before. Hood stood firmly by her side, calm and unmoved as an image of molten metal.

"I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful Day of Judgment, when the secrets of the heart shall be disclosed, that if

either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured, that if any persons are joined together otherwise than as God's word doth allow, their marriage is not lawful."

The end had come ; the temple of the man's life was crumbling even to the foundation before this moral earthquake. He had not a hope left ; yet at that moment his face was lit with the benign light of Heaven—never had bridegroom seemed more dignified or hopeful.

"Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinances in the holy estate of matrimony ? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor, and keep her in sickness and in health ; and forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her so long as ye both shall live ?"

Suddenly the door flew open and Kilman burst into the room.

"He is here ! I forbid the banns."

The minister paused, and all turned to see who it was that had broken in upon them so rudely. The first thought in Hood's mind was that his friend had temporarily lost his reason through over-excitment ; but in spite of all a sense of sudden relief came over him. He saw

Kilman, his hand uplifted, running towards them. In the shadow of the doorway he detected a half-crouching, shrinking form.

"Question him, Wright," Kilman whispered, in an appealing, agonized tone.

Hood followed his friend out of the room, after having explained, as well as he could, to the clergyman officiating that it would be necessary for him to see this person before the ceremony proceeded further. He was on the point of speaking to Desfous when Kilman, no longer able to contain himself, burst forth :

"It is true, Paul had no more to do with the forgeries than Nicodemus himself ; an undertaking that was entirely original with Desfous, carried out with assistance of no man, made successful by his own superior skill. I knew I was right. Anna has done this—Anna, the fractious creature, the irascible shrew, the vixen, the schemer, the querulous, quarrelsome, disputatious, vindictive virago ! Oh, the resentful, peevish wretch !"

He had not nearly exhausted his vocabulary when Hood turned to Desfous, and, taking him aside, left Kilman to pour forth his over-burdened soul upon the uncomplaining darkness which surrounded him. After a few moments spent in conversation with Desfous, Hood returned to him.

"We must not be too hasty, Kernochan, for we may find ourselves mistaken, after all. Some one has been using their imagination to serve some evil purpose, but who it is I am not prepared to say. George will arrive very shortly. You wait here until he comes, and take him upstairs. I will join you presently."

Hood returned to the surprised and very much puzzled company, and going up to the consul he whispered something in the latter's ear ; then he drew Clarisse aside and led her into an adjoining room.

"Before we proceed any further, Clarisse," he said, "I want you to tell me just how much of this story about Paul was created in your own brain ?"

The lady drew herself up. She had followed him willingly, as if feeling perfectly confident in herself. If she had any misgivings, she showed no signs of the same. She gave a disdainful toss of the head, and, with a dangerous gleam in her eyes, she replied :

"I do not care to discuss this matter further. I gave you your choice, and, at the last moment, your courage has failed you, apparently. I refuse to have any more dealings with such a man. George Bourondeen will be here shortly,

according to our agreement. I beg you to withdraw and not further interrupt the proceedings."

With much hauteur she swept across the floor and was about to leave the room, when Hood sprang in front of her.

"Stay. Desfous is in this house. What he has told me proves that your accusation against Paul is a wicked fabrication that contains not a grain of truth."

There was an almost imperceptible movement of the eyes that suggested some inward strife, but whatever was her alarm, she turned it off in a mocking laugh.

"And what he has told you, you do not hesitate to believe? So you have not learned, even at your age, that one man's oath is as good as another man's falsehood. What is your proof?—the statement of an acknowledged criminal. What is my proof?—the confession of the person himself who has committed the deed. Which, do you think, will hold good at law? I leave the answer for you to divine."

"Paul has made a confession, then?"

"I understand that George has contrived to draw from his unfortunate brother, a statement to the effect that he had more to do with the death of Desfous' wife, his mistress, than any

other person, living or dead." This last she breathed in his ear with a soft, purring sound.

He felt her warm breath upon his neck, and it made him shudder. He started from her with a hasty exclamation :

"It is some vile plot. I will not believe it. I shall warn George of this as soon as he arrives."

"Go and do so, if you must. Thwart me in every way. Make it as hard for me as you can. Why do you not kill me at once? brute that you are. My God, it would have been a kindness to have done so long ago!"

She threw herself upon the sofa and began to sob hysterically. Hood was on the point of leaving the room, but he paused before the door. Something was holding him back; he could not leave her thus. The prone figure fascinated him. The heaving shoulders filled with him pity. Her sobbing, faint and suppressed, not harsh and turbulent as from a being of a coarser mould, reached his heart. He felt himself drawn towards her. In a moment he went and stood beside her.

"Clarisse," he said, "I have always wished the best for you. Had you been willing to restrain your evil propensities all might have been well between us."

She did not stir for a moment, but began to

sob anew. All at once she sprang to her feet and threw her arms about him. The movement was cat-like in its agility, it was the bound of the tigress, quick and unerring, that has been watching from ambush her unwitting prey. She buried her hand in his shoulder, she clasped him frantically, she continued her sobbing as if there was a heart bursting within her quick-heaving bosom.

“My life, I love you ! Do not leave me ! Do not leave me ! You are my all. I care only for you.”

“Clarisse, this was ended long ago !”

Hood spoke coldly, trying to unclasp her arms.

“Why did you desert me ? I should never have troubled you. You would have been free as I wished to be free. I craved only for your love. Even now it is not too late to repair the wrong. I have allowed no moral impediment to come between us. No one dare impute such infamy to me.”

She sank upon the floor, still sobbing bitterly ; holding his knees and tightening her grasp, as if she feared to let him go from her.

“Be silent, Clarisse. Your acts can only be atoned for by repentance and self-abnegation. I could not make you better ; you would tinge,

with a deeper cast, the bad that is within me. It cannot lessen evil to couple wrong with wrong."

The words came forth in measured accents, but Hood trembled while he spoke—he was wavering in his resolves. He felt tempted to lift her up and promise everything, for his heart was touched. He even dreamed for a moment that he might take her and revive the good that had long since died within her.

All at once there came the sound of a bell, ringing sharp and clear through the room, and he was reminded of George's expected arrival. Immediately, with the thought of his friend's presence, he felt his strength return to him. He tore himself from her grasp and she fell forward upon the floor.

"Clarisse," he said, "you have confessed your treachery ; I believe this affair ends here. I will go to George and tell him of his release."

It was the ill-calculated missile to the slumbering beast that, wounding but slightly, serves only to anger beyond all bound of reason. In an instant, with a fierce shriek of pain, she was upon her feet, crouching as if to spring upon him, and her terrible rage burst forth. "*Bête ! poltron !*" no name was bad enough to be applicable to him ;

every conceivable epithet was hurled at him. She had confessed nothing, she had nothing to confess ; she had spoken the truth and he would do well to smother his precipitancy in vinegar. It was the exploding of a furnace, the breaking out of a volcano ; the hot ashes fell about him in showers of flame ; he was scorched and burned until his senses became numb.

He moved backwards to avoid her, but she followed him about the room. He caught her wrists in his hands and held them as in a vise, but her tongue ran on as if she would never tire. At last with a mad effort he flung her from him and she fell exhausted into a chair.

In the meantime George arrived. Kilman met him at the door and led him upstairs,—trying all the while to explain to him what had happened,—telling the whole story as it appeared to his mind,—in his excitement expressing himself so incoherently that George at last became alarmed as to the sanity of his friend. Thus Hood found them after leaving Clarisse and hastening to the room above.

What was the story about his sister, George wanted to know. Desfous must have some design in telling such a falsehood. Anna could

never have been guilty of an act like this ; besides, Paul had already confessed his crime. He could not take the risk on Desfous' words alone against such evidence ; for, if it were true about Paul, then Clarisse would be sure to make her revenge more burning. George could not be persuaded from his resolve, although the two others did their utmost to impress upon him the uselessness and the true enormity of the sin which he contemplated committing. At last he tore himself from them and descended the stairs. Hood knew that he had been circumvented in his own noble determination, and his sorrow was bitter indeed. Kilman, now more alive than dead, had not another word to say,—both followed meekly after George, feeling as helpless as two new-born lambs.

But now, what seemed strangest of all, Miss Carlovan herself was holding back. She had merely been indulging a whim, she explained to Hood and George in private ; there had been no intention on her part of engaging in an affair of such uncertain issue. She had never expected to be taken at her word. She could not think of marrying. She had had but one love, and that one had had proved false—never ; men were all the same bad lot ; she would not sacrifice her

independence, she would not be tied to any living mortal. Marriage?—bah! It was but a cloak for the more free indulgence in wickedness. She preferred the world's contumely to a travesty of honor. She demanded this, however:—it was her will; she would not explain the reason—a mere fancy of hers to try her powers in a new direction:—he should promise not to marry Miss Hillern, to whom he had been engaged, else he should suffer the consequences of her displeasure.

Had she, then, merely been trying to show her power? was this the plot? or had a sudden cloud, appearing upon her horizon, so offended as to prompt to a new caprice? George, then, in one sense, was a free man still; but there was one fatal restriction. Now, it remained to be proved whether the brother had been guilty of a villianous mendacity, or this man who seemed so plausible in his confessions. As soon as they were able to leave, George and Hood set forth, taking Desfous between them. This mystery was to be sifted to the very bottom.

And now for Mr. Kilman Kon. The last act was over to this sad day of care, and there was nothing left for him to do but to withdraw, and returning home, endeavor to revive his much exhausted faculties, if such were still possible.

By his labors he had averted a terrible calamity to one whom he hoped soon to be allied closely by his contemplated marriage, and in a measure he was satisfied, though still troubled by the fact that the affair, as yet, remained unsettled. After their return to the waiting and surprised others, Kilman, upon perceiving Clarisse, in his anger, had thrown at her a look that must have vanquished completely a less formidable personage ; and through the remaining moments, while the last explanation was going on, he kept up a running fire with his optics. But unfortunately for him, the lady did not wither into a sibyl as he had intended ; instead, she remained quite unaffected by his volleys ; and when her time came, after his two friends had withdrawn from the field, she suddenly turned upon him the battery of her own glances and opened fire.

Had Kilman been in his usual condition of vigor and mental composure all would have yet been well ; but his vital tenacity was at a low ebb now, and his thinking powers all completely paralyzed ; in consequence, it was not many moments before our friend, with forces completely routed, had no alternative left but ignominious surrender.

CHAPTER XVI.

A LOST OPPORTUNITY.

"What has become of Desfous?" George and Hood, walking along the street that same night, had been talking together so earnestly that their charge had quite escaped their notice. Coming into Hood's street, leaving the crowded thoroughfares, Hood first became aware of the man's absence and hence his exclamation.

"He may have lost track of us in the crowd, but I fancy he has made good his escape. It is all some cruel hoax, I know."

"You will not believe your brother guilty of such wrong against you, then?"

"No; it is impossible. In a moment of weakness and terrible passion he may have made a mistake, but never can I believe him capable of plotting coldly such deep injury to his own brother."

They entered Hood's chambers and a message was immediately despatched to Mr. Kon's address, bearing the information that Desfous had disap-

peared, and desiring him to do whatever lay within his power towards helping to the man's discovery. Sitting down to await a response some precious cigars were smoked, invaluable at that hour of wretched uncertainty, soothing and subduing it would seem, from the deep silence that came over them. The boy returned, but Mr. Kon had not; an answer would be sent as soon as he arrived. The room grew still once more.

A lamp was burning upon the table, and now and then, attracted by the light, a miller would come flitting in at the window and circle gayly about it. Poor deluded creatures, did they see, in the brilliant flare, happy insect immortality? Again and again they hurled themselves against the hot shade; but each time no more forewarned till, scorched at last to death, they fell fluttering down, and soon the end came to all their suffering. Hood rose and extinguished the light, for it was apprising too many of the winged order of their whereabouts; then he returned to his seat by the window once more and all grew quiet for a time—only the troubled fluttering, now and then, of some partly-burned, sad, suffering, and repentant moth.

“Do you mind telling me your story now, George? Since I have learned so much of it, it

seems as if it might be as well that I should hear all. How long have you known of Paul's trouble?"

"Perhaps it is as well. This whole affair has occupied but a week."

"Miss Carlovan took time by the forelock; her campaign was well planned and most cleverly carried out; your release seems like a special act of Providence. Was it she who first warned you of Paul's doings?"

"One week ago I received a letter from this woman, the tone of which was so mysterious that I was led into making an appointment with her. Then it was that I first had any intimation of my brother's short-comings—she did not threaten me then, however; she only begged that I would see Paul, and learn if it were not so. Of course, I went to my brother immediately, and questioned him; I did not mention to him the source of my information, and he was disposed to conceal his guilt; but his face betrayed him, and when he found that I knew all, he broke down and made a clean breast of it. It is the old story of wine, women and gaming: he had lavished a large part of his fortune in this direction, and the rest had been squandered in other pursuits; he was being sorely pressed on all sides for money, and

threatened with abandonment here. Some act was committed which excited his jealousy and brought on a serious quarrel. In a moment of frenzy he took this woman's life. You remember how her death was attributed to her own hands at hearing a report that was going the rounds about Paul's returning to this country to be married. The evidence was thought by some to be conclusive at the time, but the truth is, there was no evidence save Paul's own statement, and a letter, written apparently in the poor girl's own hand, as you doubtless recall. Well, Paul has confessed to me that he forged that letter himself and placed it in her room, where it could not have been overlooked. The story which he told at the time, of course, was false; but, as no other witnesses of the deed came forward, and as there were no indications of any sort to prove the contrary, the authorities could not have done otherwise than put it down as a case of suicide."

"But you know the rest. Paul managed to live for a while in Paris after this, and the winding up of his exploits there was the illness through which you took care of him, and perhaps saved his life. He came home at last and no doubt would have borne this guilty secret in his bosom to the end of his days without confessing it, had

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not Miss Carlovan been prompted by feelings of malice to come to me and disclose the truth."

"In all probability, there would have been no disclosures but for her promptings. But where, pray, did she secure the facts necessary for the same?"

"It seems to have been the result of a singular coincidence. Not long ago she happened to come across a book which at one time she had lent to Paul and which was returned to her shortly after this melancholy affair. To be brief, she has shown me papers which she found between the leaves of this same book, and which bear unmistakable evidence of Paul's machinations."

"A most singular coincidence, truly. Such may have been the case—perhaps."

"Perhaps!"

"You seem determined not to believe that there is a possibility of treachery."

"Beliefs can bear little weight against such *prima facie* evidence. But it is not a question of guilt. I wish you to understand, Wright, that I do not seek to shield my brother from punishment for anything that he has done; far from it. I believe him to be so irredeemably bad that justice calls out for his punishment, and were I alone concerned, I should make public all that I

know regarding the affair and let the law discover, if possible, the exact nature of his sin. You surely cannot wonder at my action, however, when you consider the position in which I am placed."

"Very true, and until this story is disproven you cannot hope for a release."

"Till then I am this woman's slave ; she commands me, I have but to obey. I shall take no chances, for I believe her to be as vicious and unbending as she is clever."

"You will not marry Maude, then, so long as this cloud rests on your brother's life ?"

It was like the plaintive cry of a child ; Hood's soul was wrung with deepest agony. This evil to which he was so closely allied, in its spread, was fast wrecking the lives of those nearest to his heart. With his head bowed upon the window-sill, his nerves all unstrung, he saw the whole world one vast sea of crime of which he was its fountain-head.

"You would not have her associated with such infamy."

Hood only groaned, he could not make reply : there seemed no hope.

They remained thus in solemn, painful thought ; there was companionship in their grief ;

they did not wish to part. Long after midnight Briggs came to them, pale and breathless ; his master had not returned—it was something unheard of in him—he was alarmed for his master's safety. Did they know of his whereabouts? Perhaps he was with Desfous—all might be well yet—they would hear from him soon without doubt.

The hushed and solemn hours rolled by and nothing new occurred to relieve their suspense. Gradually the city began to awaken, and in time the eastern sky became suffused with a faint glow of coming morn. If either slept, it was a troubled, conscious sleep, all vivid dreams, more horrible and wearisome than their thoughts in wakefulness. At last the day broke bright and beautiful, and the light of the sun came flooding the chamber in which they sat. Then it was George rose and flung himself upon the sofa, and soon was lost in heavy slumber. Hood watched him until the sunbeams had crept across the room, and were shining full upon his friend's face ; perceiving this he started up, and, after going to the window and lowering the awning, he stole softly into his bedroom ; here he paced up and down the floor for several moments, wrapped in the deepest thought. At last he lay down upon his bed and soon sank into a deep sleep himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FATE OF THE PRODIGAL.

This story might be concluded here and its sequel left to the imagination of the reader, but, as so large a majority of people prefer purchasing their imaginings at the nearest book-stall to tasking their own creative powers, it is the author's duty to whip up his very much jaded Pegasus, and, humane societies to the contrary, endeavor to make him drag out this lumbering and perhaps extravagant tale across the burning desert of fancy through many miles more of treacherous sands.

“Where are we?—Hum: fast in a slough. But this is a desert. Well, we would say a sand-heap, but standing in all due dread of system, we fear lest rhetoric should frown upon us and brand it as inharmonious, vague, and unessential. Pegasus tugs in vain: he is a willing animal, in spirit, but the flesh, or the muscles, or the heart, or some other important driving function is weak. He does not even show a disposition to resent the en-

couragement offered him ; seems inclined, rather, to sink himself quietly down upon the sand and there shuffle off a wearisome and unhappy existence. But high, there ! Gee ! Whoa up ! So now ! Once more ! The wheels move, the sand creaks, the dust flies, and Pegasus sneezes. Now his ears droop backward, and he settles down into a mild jog once more determined.

The man in the moon is looking, the stars are twinkling, and altogether we confess to embarrassment. There is a gentleman in the closet, a lady in the parlor, and a third party upon the carpet making a commotion which the lady is endeavoring, with little success, to suppress. A bit of a broil—domestic or otherwise, during which the following tale unfolds and penetrates the key-hole of the aforementioned place of concealment.

A bad brother, a black-sheep in a very white and spotless flock, goes forth from home to see the world, taking with him numerous iron-bound instruments, exchangeable at indicated points on the earth's surface for good commercial medium, whereby happiness, within certain limits of the metrical scale, was to be obtained. Now the capacity of this bad brother to enjoy, in a given time, the good fruits of this world, was quite equal to that of the most capacious black-sheep of

the day ; and since the power of said instruments to procure commercial medium in sufficient quantities to satisfy said capacity, was by no means commensurate, said brother, as not infrequently proves to be the case with black-sheep of all times, soon found himself dependent upon his own native resources in order to meet the most simple conditions that the stomach imposes for the privilege of being. But here the similarity fails ; for this black-sheep, instead of returning all fleeced and hungry, to the parental fold according to the wonted practises of black-sheep prodigals who have folds to return to, chooses instead to eke out an existence—possibly being better aware of the gullibility of human nature than some, and the presence in this world of many fat and poorly protected gardens—an existence, not in accordance with the ways of industrious, conscientious, and sober-minded citizens, but by such short-cut methods as his wits could discover.

This person, one day, after a prolonged and especially hilarious debauch, the reaction resulting from a stroke of unusually good luck at gaming, finds himself emerging at the smaller end of the cornucopia, without friends and less credit. But here fortune, with her wonted perspicacity and inscrutable wisdom, sent him an opportunity

in the shape of an offer from an old acquaintance. It seems that this acquaintance, through some strange providential happening, had fallen into a fortune and, at the same time, a notion to exploit in new fields—she had conceived the idea of being honorably and handsomely wed, and no sooner thought than undertaken.

Said brother was unscrupulous as to the means where the ends offered no better alternative, and said acquaintance knew well the true value of her inductive powers; the two heads were put together and feminine intuition and whims, coupled with masculine sense and masculine needs, speedily had outlined and forthwith evolved the project herein already described; only had the untimely and very unnecessary arrival of a third party upon the scene thwarted them in its successful termination.

Such were the revelations that came flooding upon the overwrought mind of Mr. Kilman Kon during the interval of angry outpourings, prompted of disappointed hopes and baffled ambition, that same night as he remained trembling in his concealment. Paul, by the aid of capital advanced or profits anticipated, had gotten himself into a state of mind by no means amiable, and at a late hour, had put in an appearance for the pur-

pose of learning the latest returns and securing, if possible, the very much needed sum which had been promised in compensation for valuable services.

He had come with the full expectation of finding this small matter of business quite through with,—the necessary papers all executed, and the contracting parties withdrawn,—and his rage at learning of the failure of his plans reached beyond all bounds of reason. Unlike most men given to excesses, Paul never betrayed himself when under the influence of alcoholic stimulants ; but, on the contrary, he grew less confidential as he imbibed ; in consequence, success with him was possible in great undertakings where the greatest secrecy was necessary to be maintained. It was disappointment at finding no profit accruing to him from his labors in this matter that caused him to make so many statements as to convince the person under concealment of the truth of his previous intuitions. Moreover, he was inclined to be abusive and began to threaten. He had fulfilled his part and was not to be put off because she had not succeeded in hers ; he would make the lady's life unbearable in the future ; it would no longer be worth her while to live if the money agreed upon was not forthcoming.

And Miss Carlovan was in a state of mind but little less turbulent. She was in no manner disposed to give up her much coveted funds, and especially to pay for his part in a profitless result; nor had she the slightest intention of doing so, thus she declared. How she managed to avert a calamity and turn away the unhesitating and high-tempered being, it is hard to say; certain is it, however, that she did. How she contrived as well to persuade Kilman to come forth from his hiding, is a problem in human persuasiveness that must remain unsolved. It is an established fact, none the less, as will be seen later, that Kilman did come forth. Moreover, having been induced to come forth, after great exhortation and much assurance against bodily harm, Kilman did not deign to notice the lady, nor even stop to arrange his much disordered *tout ensemble* until he reached the door. Impelled by certain resolves, made there in the darkness and dread, he had seized his hat and had started to go, fully determined that never would he sleep again until every wrong had been adjusted in the terrible affair, and each malefactor punished. But, reaching the door, Kilman had paused.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TREATS OF SAINTS AND SINNERS.

So George went back to his law and Hood went back to his indolence, and the days came and passed away and the months rolled by. The man who had come so unexpectedly upon the field, and perhaps so opportunely, has as unexpectedly and mysteriously disappeared ; but whether his commission had been devilish or otherwise was a point on which the two friends were divided, although, that same potent force had moved him, they were both agreed. Hood, for his part, however, when separated from his imagination, was rather inclined to lay everything at the door of the delinquent brother, for he felt sceptical regarding the extent of Paul's crimes, though not of his wrong doings ; besides, there were intuitions which Desfous had planted somewhere in his anatomy, and these were ever cropping out—only the presence of his other and better half could hold them in check.

They searched long and diligently for this erratic person ; but the world is very large com-

pared with men, hence the difficulty in identifying him. And as upon him depended the sole means of disproving this story, they could do nothing else but strive to cultivate their patience. They found little cause to hope ; for to them it seemed more than probable that his mind being relieved by his confession, or his object accomplished, he had again sought concealment, and now was not likely to put in an appearance voluntarily.

Several times they called upon Kilman Kon to consult with him regarding the man's strange disappearance and to learn if he had discovered anything new ; but each time Kilman was less disposed to be communicative, more morose and unsympathetic, till it became plain that a great change had come over him. No longer did he meet his friends with the old warm-hearted enthusiasm, but rather, seemed to shrink from them ; always now sulky and captious, rarely looking people in the face, or if so, always wearing an expression of defiance. His most accustomed haunts he little frequented ; places that had been habitual with him, knew him no more. There came a day when no one had seen him, a week passed by and his absence grew conspicuous, a month, and there was not one person in the whole city who had met

any one who could say or, at any rate, was willing to explain anything concerning his whereabouts.

Through these days of confusion and doubt there was, in the region across the river, one pair of black eyes that grew tearful and snappish by turns as they watched eagerly each form that chanced to come by the long avenue of ancestral trees ; and there was one heart that, anon, beat madly or stood still, at the sound of approaching wheels ; there was one spirit that waited, but waited in vain, the coming of its flame that should kindle the mad conflagration of amorous reciprocity. One tender, affectionate, winsome being, that, in her truthfulness and innocence, had bestowed her love, unhesitatingly, for the mere asking, upon the one person that had appeared to be the noblest and most fitting of all his kind. Thus day by day was this young, sweet, fair, devoted creature, fast losing that faith in all mankind which she had so lucklessly pledged to one.

Poor Cornelia ! she never confessed her tale of blighted hopes to any one ; but let concealment, like a worm in the bud, feed on her damask cheek ; she pined in thought, but meekness was not hers ; soon anger grew to be her nourishment, and as the months rolled by her old time sprightliness returned ; only the inner self was changed. No

longer light and trustful now but bitter and shrewish, prone to use a biting tongue ; sometimes sad and contemplative, seeming to shun company, choosing rather the companionship of trees and flowers and stones,—silent congenial friends in whom there is no harm.

This man—then a great, clumsy, overgrown boy, and she a maiden with skirts and stockings much briefer than herself—had often held her upon his knee. Even then she had fancied him more than others, and he, at that oldest of all ages, when children reflect the would-be man too much and mortify, had condescended to notice her. It had been her greatest delight to romp with him at all times, and when he went away to spend a short time abroad, she shed some secret tears,—she knew not why. Then he returned to her, and though now she was a woman grown, with him she would almost forget herself—she was the child still, and he unchanged. The same harmless innocent friendship was renewed. But one day, walking in his garden, he plucked a flower and gave it to her ; all artlessness, she chanced to look into his face and their eyes met ; but instantly she looked down and blushed, her heart stood still and then throbbed strangely once or twice, she turned her head aside and started

nervously. A new world suddenly had been opened to her, and in her maiden innocence she was bewildered ; though she had dreamt of this and read so much—but then her dreams were vague and all her reading false. She sighed, she knew not why ; grown timid all at once, she would have flown from him like a frightened bird. But he had not spoken to her then, and the weeks rolled by, he coming often, always bringing some token of his favor, showing every attention ; she longing for his coming, yet ever shunning him when he came. It was no more the merry greeting of dispassioned friendship ; always now doubt, wonderment, and mistrust ; as if they were two enemies at sword's points, maneuvering for their ground, drawn towards each other by a passion that can kill as well, ready to fly together, or to fly apart as soon.

She did not understand the meaning of all those yearnings in her tender bosom ; she feared this man now, yet she could not live without him, and to see another in his company was maddening. His attention and his show of special admiration were all a woman's just due, they were unappreciated ; if they made her petulant, she would have been more petulant without them. When at last his tale of love was told what could

she do but return him a defiant No. Poor child, it was her only safeguard, for what did she know of love ; it was incomprehensible to her and she felt like one turned adrift alone upon a dark tempestuous sea. But when he bid her good-bye and started to go away, then only did she yield to her emotion and, running after him, fling herself madly into his arms regardless of the great danger that there was of being observed.

It had all occurred in a few brief moments, but those moments had been hours, aye, a century to her, which bridged a great chasm in her life. All at once she had spanned that broad gulf which separated childhood and muliebrity ; she had become a woman all at once, and, in the passionate outpourings of her soul, for the first time she knew the joys and sorrows that a woman feels.

Owing to the dullness and unimaginativeness of the human mind every idea has to be presented to it in some way or other by means of object lessons. It was because the idea, by no other means could be made comprehensible, that the two most apparent forces busy upon this earth were materialized—the creative and the destructive, the positive and the negative, Satan and the Almighty ; the one clothed in darkness, hideousness, and

horns, the other in such dazzling splendor that the eyes are rendered powerless to behold it ; both, in man's cock-vanity, given the form of the very incomplete human, as if it were the noblest work that could be conceived of. To a careless observer it must seem as if the Devil is the most active and that his children have by far the best time of it—this has even been declared to be an actual fact by very good authority ; and without doubt a careful averaging up of pleasures and pains would leave a large balance of the former in favor of the gentleman with the cloven foot. The truth is, much hammering is as good for the soul as it is for iron ; all people are turned out of the same workshop, and the treacherous well-appearing cast metal—more plentiful because more quickly and more easily made—may be regarded as the devil's construction, while the wrought bars alone can be the outcome of a wise far-seeing, unfaltering intelligence.

Now what has prompted this digression is Miss Anna Bourondeen. All through those times of trouble and much troubling, every wish of hers had been gratified ; and even she had been saved—as if it were an especial act of Satanic favor—the terrible shock to her senses through the discovery of a certain instance of bad selective taste

at a point where she had every reason to expect the greatest perspicacity. Troubles appeared to pass her by as a thief does an unpropitious forage, till it seemed as if her nature must not have been susceptible to such, or else the Devil was protecting her. And it had been with her thus all through her life ; if people had suffered, the suffering more often had been in the way of what her wishes were ; if they had had joys she generally contrived to participate in them. Her days had glided by smoothly, and if she had experienced no great delights, such as are only for the few higher organizations, she had experienced no corresponding depressions.

There are people in the world whose destiny seems to be to knock about the divers paths of life and trip up the pursuing multitude. Others there are whose particular end is as that of a sort of chain-and-ball attachment to the ankle of some industrious, persevering, and worthy person, whom fate has undeservedly sentenced to restraint. Not so often is it from malice as from their own stupidity that such ones become stumbling blocks or hobbles, not so often wittingly, as unwitting, but the end is still the same. Many and many are thus cast down ; few, few, who reach the goal towards which they set out.

With this notion before us we turn to Anna Bourondeen once more. She had a conscience, she bore malice against no one; she went to church as regularly as Sunday came, she had a class in Sunday School, she was a leading light in the congregation, and the head of a sewing society organized for the purpose of furnishing raiment to the unclad heathen. Moreover, she took a prominent part in all charitable works of the day and sometimes even visited the lowly and indigent of the parish that they might have the benefit of her wisdom and advice. She was a most devout woman, and every night regularly she prayed to be especially forgiven for her unpardonable sins, and then as regularly lay down and quickly sank into slumber, sweetly conscious that she had committed no sins, and that, should she by chance be called away before awakening, she had but to mention her name to the angel at the gate of Heaven, to secure admission and a ready conduct to a foremost place amongst the gods.

The trouble with Anna Bourondeen was her conscience, which was too readily adaptable to her desires; and her mind which could perceive but one side of a question—her own side; and perceiving, never could conquer her innate perversity so as to permit the existence of a belief in

any other side. We admire Miss Anna for her many worthy qualities, we rejoice with her in the possession of so distinguished a name; we weep with her because of the heedlessness and ignorance of this wicked world—but withal we are forced to confess our belief that through her own misguided acts, and her own want of judgment and common sense, she has always been a very large and perhaps little imagined obstacle over which her worthy family has been forever tripping.

But where the intentions were always so good must we condemn her for this? Alas, it is a question in dynamics, hydrostatics, hygiene, and constructology, which we respectfully pass on to the next, being altogether unable to answer it ourselves.

CHAPTER XIX.

DEATH'S VICTORY.

Through the long and weary days of that eventful summer, Maude Hillern, like a rare and tender plant reft of its just nourishment and sunlight, might have faded away and sadly died as many others have done ere this. But there is, in systematic toil, a secret alchemy that deadens recollection and tempts to a longer sufferance, enabling us to bear the world's severest visitations, when otherwise the heart must burst at last from overburdening grief; and this poor Maude discovered before many moons had come and passed away. After her separation from George she contrived—not altogether unassisted perhaps—to secure an opening for herself and a means of subsistence in a position where her natural talent and her knowledge of the French language was of service. She continued to live with her aunt, but she was very proud and would not be dependent upon her, although the kind-hearted old lady would gladly have kept her with her without further compensation than an occa-

sional lending of her assistance about the house when it was agreeable.

Since that fatal day Maude had not seen George ; he had never communicated with her, nor had he ever sought her out since that day. But Wright Hood she often met, and always at such times he had words of encouragement to offer regarding her lover ; indeed, it was upon his assurance that the matter would right itself in the end, she lived and kept up her hope through the months and months that followed. It is not unlikely that Hood, had he chosen so to do, could have gained Maude's consent to a union with himself—a union of convenience in truth, yet prompted from mutual regard ; for, by his disinterested devotion to her, he had won her deepest respect, and, though, their natures would not attune, yet might he, since the fire of passion was forever extinguished within her heart, have so taken advantage of the naturally tender qualities of her being as to have brought her into the belief that it was right, that it was even her duty to bestow herself on him.

Such a wish, however, was fartherest from Hood's mind. He had for her a strong affection, but in his unselfishness he wished only for her happiness, and he was feeling confident that it

must be but a short time before something would occur to set George free ; anyway, he never could have forced himself into thinking that a union of the kind would be right ; for he had enough insight into human nature to be able to analyze Maude's feelings towards himself.

There arose no feeling of embarrassment between these two when they met, as might be supposed, after Hood's confession. In each other's company they felt the perfect confidence of trusted friends. This could never have been had not their conditions been so neutral ; even then there must have been mistrust if Hood had not so conducted himself as to conceal any feelings whatever, other than those of dispassioned friendship. It was a calm and satisfied relationship which stirred up none of the thousand petty emotions begotten of passionate regard. To Maude, whose wandering life had prevented her from keeping any friendship long, his staunch devotion came most opportunely ; while to Hood it was a new experience, for his own natural diffidence had prevented him from seeking acquaintance with women, and the circumstances of his life had been of a nature little calculated to further anything of the kind ; having been of that high-life sort which, though it brings about much con-

tact, involves so many precepts and observances, and so much proctorage, so much subterfuge, so much mistrust, as to be almost fatal to the formation of anything like an intimacy or the discovery of an affinity.

During these days Wright and George met frequently ; the good-fellowship of the old time was renewed, and gradually they became accustomed to the new grooves into which their lives had been turned. But the thought which was foremost in the minds of these men never found utterances now ; they never touched upon this subject that had stirred up the strongest passions in their natures and called upon them for the deepest exercise of courage and good judgment ; they let it lie a lump of lead upon their hearts, an anchor against new temptations.

The winter passed by and the summer came again, and the things that were now seemed more and more as if they must be through all time. One morning early in August, Hood sat in his restaurant waiting for the arrival of the breakfast which he had ordered. He had, but a few days previously, returned from a short cruise on a celebrated yacht of the day, and was looking brown and healthy in body from breathing the unpolluted air of the sea, and basking in the sum-

mer sun ; and had been much benefited in mind by the experience of blue skies, storms, glorious moonlight nights, and all the varied occurrences of that most inimitable of all recreations.

He was going through the usual form of looking over the morning paper ; he had glanced over the principal pages and had read most of the headings ; he had waded through numerous columns of more or less important matter in order that he might not get behindhand in the great rush of time ; he had studied the records of stock exchange aerostatics, the latest predictions from the weather bureau, and, being something of a nautical man, the calendar of the sun and tides. He found therein the same old story of sorrow and want ; of love, malice, and ambition—of all the mean and paltry passions that govern human nature ; he was about to throw it down in disgust, for he had learned it pretty much by rote, when all at once he was struck by the heading of a paragraph which caused his heart to sink within him, and he hastily read it through. It told of the attempted arrest of a man who was wanted in Paris for a forgery he had committed several years previously ; the detectives had been on his tracks for some time, and finally had run down their game in an old tenement-house where he

had taken refuge. But when they had surrounded the building and the man found himself at bay, he had turned from them and flung himself out of the window, dashing out his brains upon the pavement beneath. This unfortunate being was Desfous.

This was the end, then. Desfous' secret perished with him. There could be no hope of release now save in the death of the persecutors, and there was little likelihood of that. Hood was in despair; his appetite left him; he took two or three mouthfulls of the breakfast he had ordered, and then he paid the waiter and hurried from the place.

He clung to one forlorn hope still: perhaps Desfous had left behind him some record of his crime; perhaps, expecting his end, he had written a confession of his life. Hood lost no time in seeking out the detectives who had discovered Desfous. All the man's effects, he learned, had been collected and were properly billeted awaiting the advice from the French authorities. Nothing, however, had been met with which could let in any new light on the affair, although everything had been gone over carefully; even the floor of his room had been torn up, and every possible corner searched where there seemed a likelihood

of finding some hidden record. Hood turned away at last, feeling heavy at heart indeed.

Hood had resolved to go and pay a visit to Miss Maude that evening; indeed, he had met her upon the street the day previously and had promised to come then; but now he had half a mind not to keep the appointment and plead as an excuse, when they should meet in the future, unlooked-for and most pressing business. He wanted to see George concerning this strange affair, and with that idea in his mind he went to George's office; but George had been unexpectedly called away and there was no telling when he would return. Hood waited the whole day through, expecting to receive some word from his friend, but as the afternoon wore away he gave up all hope of seeing him; and, having overruled whatever prejudices had been prompted in his breast against going, when the proper time arrived he set out to go to the residence of Mrs. Lovering.

Hood was anything but agreeable company that evening—his mind was troubled, and more than once he found himself in an awkward position from inattention to what Maude or her aunt was saying. So noticeable was his abstraction Maude quickly perceived that something was dis-

turbing his thoughts, and as the interest she felt in him caused, through sympathy, a corresponding feeling on her own part, soon she became anxious to gain his confidence.

"Mr. Hood is not with us in the spirit to-night, although the material being may have condescended to favor us with its presence," she said, when her aunt had retired for the night and left them to themselves.

To Hood the words were mere sounds, and conveyed no meaning to his mind; for his thoughts held him so deeply absorbed that he had become unconscious to any ulterior condition. They served, however, to call forth an expression from his over-burdened imagination. He spoke as if addressing an imaginary personage :

"Do you believe that every seemingly fortuitous happening finds origin in one supreme mind?"

"I cannot believe in that which stands so plainly in opposition to human reason, such as it is; I know that by reason alone we can release ourselves from servitude to all the blind passions of our lowly origin; the admission of such a belief, as the admission of a belief in the theology of tradition, is, after all, the acknowledgment of a slavish subjection to fear against which a *higher intelligence* rebels."

“ Yet the child must be held in leading strings till it can walk ; an unquestioning obedience to its guardian is needful for its own good.”

“ Too true : it is out of this necessity that the different doctrinal systems have sprung. But alas, there are too many strong men grovelling in the dust to-day, who fear to walk lest they fall and hurt themselves ; too many who persistently disregard, in the obsequious idolatry that has risen out of human dreads, the fact that there can be but one religion—the religion of truth and virtue ; and who hope to merit progress by creeping upon their knees and bending their tainted bodies in the most deplorable abjectness before the god their imagination has created.”

“ We are launching upon too broad a discussion for the present moment ; I was thinking, when I spoke, of the casualties that make or mar a human life, and wondering whether they were, in truth, the outcome of a Divine will.”

“ In other words, you question the omnipotence of the Divine will ; you ask that question which has puzzled all but theologians since people first began to think,—why are not all things made perfect ? You see in nature a constant striving for the ideal, but you notice, as well, a corresponding retrogression ; you see most deli-

cate and exquisite organizations, that have occupied centuries in the development, in a moment reduced to hideous dissolution through some ephemeral worthless growth. You turn to your own species, with its extremes of virtue and strength, of bestiality and weakness, and then you say to yourself, are we the puppets wherewith the gods find recreation? To this conclusion is it, then, that dispassionate reasoning trends, or shall we believe in a slow and systematic advance through many and diverse stages, against opposing forces without number, to higher, nobler things? As for ourselves, the mere fact of being is nothing, we are but a collocation of atoms, pleasures and pains, are simply molecular disturbances, thoughts and ideas, the assimilation of our experiences. It is destined for us to live and do, without shrinking, without questioning; the pawns must not hesitate though the chiefs war; whatever the performance, be it the most meagre, it influences the future; though the flesh decays and is reproduced, our achievements live in the achievements of those who come after. Thus, through countless generations, we have an existence; it is our immortality; it is the divine essence that dies not."

"You feel the strong under current of human

intuitions and look in the direction towards which it points to-day ; you are an iconoclast, I see, and would overthrow the disembodied idols of modern fetichism as our fathers overthrew the graven images of old Pagan worship. Perhaps you do well ; for it is true much good has come of what they accomplished in those dark times ; but it was an experiment of which many terrible evils were the outgrowth. Now, to build up a new system is doubly dangerous, for the attempt at this late hour, with the knowledge of what has been, must serve to make men reckless. Besides, we can no longer resort to the supernatural ; for men begin to see too much method in all things ; we have no foundation on which to base new dogmas and superstitions ; and a religion without these is a religion that finds no followers."

" You preach the doctrine of birch rods and allurements. We are outgrowing our childhood and childish rewards and punishments ; it is time for us to think separately, it is time for us to govern ourselves. Throw away dogmas and superstitions, they are arch tyrants that destroy body and soul. Instill courage by precept, compel reason by experience, let the baptism be of fire, that in suffering pain we may comprehend true happiness."

“Provided, of course, that we survive the burning. These are beautiful sentiments, Maude, and to the brave and strong, they convey a deep meaning; but for those who struggle wearily from day to day and see time sweeping by as if they made not an effort, can they easily content themselves in patient sufferance and turn from every temptation that presents itself?”

“True contentment comes only with the best exertion of the faculties; it is not found in the mere possession of a bauble. If this were realized more generally there would be fewer discursions into forbidden pastures.”

“But when there are no faculties?”

“With the dull the capacity for enjoyment or even suffering is limited correspondingly.”

“Tinsel to the eye, jig music and tom-toms to the ear, harsh condiments to the stomach, blood and butchery to the mind! If there was a greater sensitiveness such horrible necessities could never be. The higher organization responds to soft and tuneful music, subdued lights afford their enjoyments, hideous dissonance and tumults are an abomination. Ah, what an amplitude of pleasures and pains there must be for such a one.”

There was a touch of irony in his tone; he

had come there to commiserate her, she was commiserating him. The conversation wandered, he wished to turn it into new channels, he took the first opportunity to broach some unimportant matter.

It had been his intention to tell her the truth plainly, without faltering, and without equivocation. He lost heart and could not speak when the time came, for he knew how she must suffer, in spite of her courageous nature, to learn that her last cause to hope death had removed. How much depression of spirit she must endure to find, at her early age, the garden of her young affection, where flowed the fountain of everlasting youth, in a moment laid waste. It was a vast wilderness before her, across which she would have to toil in future alone, with nothing but woman's endurance and fortitude to bear her through ; with nothing to keep up her heart but her own pure thoughts, her own unfaltering faith in nobler things. Yet she could commiserate him ; the slough of misanthropy into which he had allowed himself to sink was more insurmountable by far. It was sturdy patience condoling the gad-fly disporting in the noonday sun.

CHAPTER XX.

AT SEA.

Upon a certain day early in Autumn, as Hood was picking his way along the street in pursuance of one of his habits which he had recalled out of desuetude since his return from abroad, he chanced to meet an old-time friend. This friend was a doughty little personage, one of the bantam order, who make up for their lack of size by mettlesome chipperness. He was a lawyer by profession,—a typical one of the type,—with no especial reputation in the class save timeliness; having the peculiar faculty of always coming to hand at important moments. He could not be classified as indigenous to any particular soil; he was of no caste, had never followed any bent of his own; circumstance had molded him as he appeared.

The early history of this individual was not on record; the only thing certain about his past was that he came of respectable yet unfortunate parents. He made no claim to anything of the

sort himself, however, declaring his origin to have been spontaneous, in the manner of an illustrious heroine of modern times. He had but one recollection of his youthful season, all else, he held, had long since passed from his memory. This took the form of a confession when, in moments of serious introspection, he found himself alone with a trusted friend. There had been a period in his life when he had fallen into bad company, and the riot and debauchery undergone, before he had gotten unsteadily out of his teens, would have made an utter wreck of a lesser being ; there were hints even that his own inborn cleverness, that something peculiar to the American atmosphere, in itself, had saved him from a really serious fate. Why he had foresworn all this, he held, was because he had discovered, shortly after arriving at years of discretion, that life offered greater opportunities in the open country than amongst the hedgerows and thickets. He was just such a person as people of independent means and indolent disposition are apt to tolerate ; for he said pleasant things, he made himself generally agreeable, and exacted no corresponding effort on their part ; he was witty and made them laugh ; the time passed all the more quickly for his company.

Ten days after his meeting this man upon the

street, Hood found himself, shortly after midnight, one stormy morning, well out towards the middle of the broad Atlantic, about latitude —, longitude —, waist deep in the briny flood, clinging to the stern of an overturned boat. The lawyer was holding the other end; both were peering at each other through the thick darkness and calling out at the top of their lungs, offering such advice to each other as the circumstances seemed to suggest to them.

We left them exchanging greetings upon a New York street. How it all came about was this : Legis—we use that appellation in lieu of the right one, which does not come to mind at present—Legis had just come from the office of the French Steamship Line; he had been there to engage a passage to France. He had determined upon allowing himself the indulgence in a short vacation, the first one since he had begun to practice at his profession; he had an opportunity to look after some business matters in Paris; he was going to combine business with pleasure and take a brief excursion across the water, and advised Hood to join him.

The suggestion came most opportunely, for Hood was feeling restless, and ready to enter into anything that presented a fair chance of distrac-

tion. Besides, he had had one or two notions in his mind of late which had led him to thinking of a trip of the kind more than once. So the subject was no sooner broached than he promised to consider it. Six days later they found themselves on board one of the transatlantic steamers, dropping down the bay, *en route* for Havre.

It was in the early Fall and the air was brisk, but no bad weather was encountered for two days out. On the third day, when nearly across the Gulf Stream, the clouds began to gather, and towards night the wind commenced to blow in fitful gusts ; then came splashes of rain, and the steamer began to labor heavily. Night fell thick and threatening, and everything was done to make the vessel snug.

The two companions spent the afternoon in pacing the deck, watching the gathering clouds, consulting the barometer, making predictions about the weather, chatting with the officers, smoking, lounging, and otherwise getting rid of the time. They took their supper at the usual hour, for they were both good sailors and never lost their appetites at sea. At twelve o'clock that night, the wind having moderated, they descended to their state room and, turning into their berths, soon were fast asleep. But their slumbers did not last long, an hour perhaps, it could

not have been more. When they came to consciousness again, they found themselves upon the floor of the room, hurrying on such clothing as they could lay hands upon in the darkness. Something had happened, they knew ; but what, in the bewilderment of sudden waking, it was impossible to tell. The commotion outside was apprising them of the worst.

What followed is an old story. The ship went down, as ships will generally do, if they only navigate the ocean for a long enough time. The reason whereof this happened, whether through the effort on the part of some ambitious navigator of the deep to demonstrate that law of physics, which makes it impossible for two objects to occupy the same space at the same time, whether it came about through misdirected zeal on the part of some grim philosopher desirous in his philanthropy of making the world more roomy, whether some spectre derelict had stood in their way, or whether there had been an unlucky flaw in the fabric of the hull or the machinery will never be known. Nor is it of great importance that it should be known. Sufficient is it to say the water of the sea gained access to the interior and, expelling the upholding air, the ship, as a matter of course, sought the most direct route to the bottom.

A panic had ensued after the first discovery of danger, as was a natural result—the crew being French. There was a mad rush for no where in particular. The boats were dumped into the water, bow foremost, stern foremost, upside-down, any way, but the right way ; men poured into the few that happened to reach the water without filling, in numbers enough to sink a dozen boats. Woman and children were left to take care of themselves ; only a few were hurried over the side by the cooler heads. Two or three of the officers tried to quell the tumult and establish some sort of system, but they might as well have lifted their voices to the beckoning waves. Had as many monkeys been on board there would have been a no greater display of reason. Not more than three of the ship's boats got away before she sank.

As for Hood, he was amongst the first of the cabin passengers to gain the deck, and his friend close behind him. He took in the situation at a glance, perceiving, by the settling of the ship in the water, that there was no chance of her floating many minutes. He ran to one of the life-boats, followed by Legis, and together they threw themselves, striking right and left, into the crowd of panic-stricken sailors that was gathered about it. The determined aspect of these two caused the

men to hold back and by using some little judgment the boat reached the water in safety. A crew was quickly made up and then the passengers were lowered into it. All at once there was a loud cry forward and a mad rush was made for the boat. Some one sprang over the rail and struck upon the gun-wale; two others followed, but, missing their mark, plunged into the water; another came down upon the heads of those already in the boat. The sailors pulled away from the vessel immediately, for they knew they were jeopardizing themselves to remain longer by its side.

Legis had behaved bravely, but at the last moment he lost his head, and was about to spring into the water when Hood caught him. Hood saw if any chance of saving themselves remained, it was not by the boats. He led Legis to the stern of the vessel, thinking to find a life-raft there, but that had been thrown overboard and already had drifted away. As the ship rose and fell with the waves, the stern seemed to get higher and higher out of the water; he turned and looked forward. The bow was almost on a level with the sea; just then a wave rolled completely over her and the water came rushing towards them, along the deck, with an angry *swash*. Several of those still remaining on deck

were washed overboard ; some began to clamber into the rigging as if to save themselves by seeking a higher point ; others fell upon their knees ; and others still ran hither and thither, wringing their hands and shrieking most pitifully.

The ship was waterlogged ; there was not a moment to lose. As a last resort, Hood sprang to the companion way and descended quickly to the cabin. In a moment he was on deck bringing with him two life-preservers. Legis was too much frightened now to help himself and Hood quickly adjusted the arrangement for him ; then he looked about him once more. “Quick ! spring for your life ! We will be sucked under.” He had just time to fasten about him the life-belt which he had secured for himself. He sprang into the water ; the momentum of falling carried him down beneath the surface ; his first impulse was to strike out ; he soon felt the air above him once more.

All at once he heard a terrible heart-piercing wail ; there was a great roar and rush of waters ; he began to sink,—down, down ; would he never come to the surface again ? His whole life seemed to pass before him as in a dream ; there were beautiful lights now about him ; he heard soft music, he felt the sensation of the weary falling asleep.

He came to himself once more. The sky was above him, looking dark and threatening ; here and there was a patch of a deeper shade where a star would now and then shine twinkling through and quickly hide itself again.

Merciful Heavens ! he was floating upon this great waste of waters, alone, with nothing but that cork circlet to buoy him up, and many, many miles between him and the nearest land. Why had he not been drowned at once ? 'Twould have spared him such a lingering death. But the love of life is strong in every breast. He began to look about him. The waters rose and fell with a languid roll ; as the waves lifted him upon their crests, he could see, floating about him in the darkness, bits of wreckage—not a sign of a living being anywhere. It was all that marked the spot where over a hundred souls had perished in a few short moments.

Peering into the gloom, he thought he saw the dark outline of a boat in the distance. He gave a loud hail. The sound of his voice through the fearful silence of the deep startled him ; he laughed a bitter laugh ; it seemed to echo through his whole being with a hollow cadence as if his bones already were disarticulated.

Who was there to hear him or, if so, could any assistance be offered ? Too well he knew

every boat afloat that night was overcrowded. But hark ! there came a faint sound across the waves.—No, it was but the echo of his voice. He called again, but this time he heard no sound. As he rose upon a wave he saw some object floating near at hand, and he struck out towards it ; cumbered as he was, he could make little headway, but gradually he drew nearer. It was a bit of wreckage floating. He thought he detected some one clinging to it ; he called out loudly, some one answered him.

A wave carried the object towards him ; he lifted his hands and seized hold of it as it was going by. He found it to be the keel of an overturned boat. There was some one clinging to the other end.

“Have courage,” a voice said, “and we may save ourselves yet.”

It was one of the ship's boats that had been upset in the launching. They tried to right the little craft ; as it came on its side, a body fell heavily from within and in a moment a wave carried it from them before they could distinguish it. The boat was a light one, one that was intended for use when in port ; there were air chambers in each end which made it buoyant. When they had turned the boat upon an even keel, Hood clambered in and tried to bail out the water with his

cap which he had had the good fortune to retain with him. It was a Herculean task, for every now and then a wave would come and, washing over the gun-wale, undo all his labors. Under one of the thwarts, presently, he discovered a small cask ; it was intended for drinking water, but it had been empty and now was full of sea water. With the boat's tiller he broke in one end and, after much labor, the water in the boat was bailed out enough to make it float without further danger. Then the person clinging to the other end clambered in and seated himself upon a thwart. They looked into each other's faces through the darkness. It was Legis. It was Hood.

A faint light began to tremble upon the eastern horizon as if the day were peering through thick hangings ; slowly, softly, solemnly the gloom drew back, like a curtain lifted, revealing a vast waste of water rolling drearily in the gray light. Brighter and brighter grew the breaking morn. Day dawned at last and the sun peeped forth only to hide itself quickly behind a bank of frowning clouds. Everywhere the boundless sea ; not a sign of life to greet the eye where'er it might chance to fall ; not a floating spar even to bear witness of that ocean tragedy, to mark the

lonely resting place of the once proud vessel. So reticent is the ocean.

The calling into life is a matter of incident. The maintaining of life at all times is precarious. On the water it is problematical to the human species. In consequence, the land is more densely peopled than the sea. Being unequipped like the fishes, man cannot convert particular elements of the sea water to his own combustion—he may convert the fishes. The possibilities of maintaining life without water extend to about three days. With spring water alone the limit lies somewhere within fifty days, as has been proven by certain zealots time and again. Hence one of the great dangers of going to sea.

For the history of the two men in the yawl-boat, during the period which intervened from the time of the wreck until they reached port, reference may be had to any book of sea tales such as every library is supplied with. It is doubtful if Legis would have lived up to the three-day limit, though Hood might have survived for a short time beyond it—at least, that is what their different conditions seemed to indicate when they were rescued upon the evening of the second day. Fortunately, the accident occurred along the direct route of travel between Europe and America, else in all probability neither of them would

have survived to relate their experiences to admiring friends afterwards. As it happened, their escape was due to the blowing overboard of a bonnet. It was from an English steamship bound for Liverpool. The occurrence drew attention to the side of the vessel. From the object fast disappearing in the wake, eyes were turned toward a black speck floating in the distance. Glasses were directed upon it and some one discerned it to be a boat with a signal of some sort flying from its mast. By such threads as these is life held within us.

To Hood, this affair was a mere incident, such as was likely to befall anyone given much to traveling by the sea. From Liverpool he telegraphed to his friends in America that he had arrived safely in port, according to his regular practice, although the fates had made an effort to detain him. It was true that they had delayed him several days and compelled him to alter his plan as to the port of landing, but in the main he had contrived to surmount every obstacle they had placed in the way of his procedure.

Hood and Legis remained in Liverpool no longer than was necessary to secure clothing sufficient to make themselves presentable upon the streets. From the wreck they had not had time enough to bring much more than a pair of unmen-

tionables apiece, and clothed in such heterogeneous articles of wearing apparel as the sympathizing crew and passengers of the rescuing vessel were kind enough to advance, they felt their identity in the world to be completely lost ; so they made haste to the nearest tailor shop that they might enlist to their aid, in re-establishing the same, the subtle and inimitable powers of that great order. They had decided to proceed directly to London for the purpose of procuring more complete outfits ; and, moreover, of putting beyond question the right of individuality in their own particular selves, cognomens, goods and chattels, and the like ; for, through their change of destination and other peculiarities attached thereto, they were encountering difficulties on all sides arising from very much disordered financial matters. Standing in the depot at last, waiting for the signal of departure for the train that was to carry them to London, who should come hurrying along and well-nigh run plump into Mr. Hood, in his anxiety to reach the train, but Wilmot Briggs, the inseparable valet to Mr. Kilman Kon. As soon as the recognition was completed, Hood looked about him, expecting, as a matter of course, to see the master in the immediate neighborhood.

Such was not the case, however. Briggs had been ordered off on furlough, had been spending

his vacation in visiting the city of his birth and, more particularly his mother, was now *en route* to London in compliance with an order from Monsieur to take himself to the railroad depot in that city and there await the arrival of Monsieur by a certain train from Dover. But, in answer to Hood's exclamation of expectation, Briggs gave a shrug of the shoulders that seemed to express much doubtful feeling on that point. He was proceeding to London because he had been so directed to do ; it was for him to obey so long as his obedience was remunerated. But he had no more idea of meeting Mr. Kon there than he had of meeting the Chief of the Zulus ; nor did he suppose that Mr. Kon had any more idea of being there than did his royal highness. Between Mr. Hood and his humble servant it was confidentially spoken, and the belief in private on the part of the latter was, that Mr. Kilman Kon had dropped overboard into the hymenial infinite his particular cardiacal arrangement, and that his wits had followed tumbling after, both now being irrecoverably lost. Moreover, it was recommended by the same that Mr. Hood should proceed to Paris with despatch and make one last effort to save all that was remaining of Mr. Kon from utter extinction.

And the valet predicted truly. Mr. Kon was

not found amongst the crowd of passengers that poured forth from the Dover train, nor did his corporeal remnant put in an appearance later at the Aberdeen, where Kilman always put up, and where Hood and Legis had put up accordingly upon their arrival in London. What was more, there was no word there of any sort for Briggs as might have been expected ; which proved, as Briggs held, that Kilman was merely exercising his prerogative in order to prevent his growing rusty from disuse. He would return to his home as he had done heretofore, and there await the further orders of Monsieur, or until such a time as his wages should cease to come to him with their accustomed regularity.

There was nothing to keep the shipwrecked twain very long in London, and Legis was particularly anxious to get over to Paris as his time was limited ; so after they had rested sufficiently to regain their usual condition of health, which had been considerably unsettled by the very severe treatment in the hands of old Neptune, and after they had fitted themselves out to their complete satisfaction, and had arranged some matters of business, they started upon their journey.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEMON AND THE MAN.

In his bed chamber in Paris one evening, wrapped in a good English ulster, upon a very stiff and uncomfortable fauteuil, Wright Hood sat shivering before a miserable, sickly ghost of a fire that was giving forth great clouds of yellow, choking smoke, as if in mock apology for the little bit of heat that it was delivering into the chimney. With his head bowed upon his hands, his hair matted and torn, his garments ample, skirts straggling upon the floor, in the faint evening light, with the smoke gathering in wreaths about him—he was the picture of despondency.

He was not noticing anything about him, not even the fire that needed his attention. His own thoughts, whatever they might be, were holding him in deep absorption. After a time something came across his mind ; all at once he rose to his feet, and, calling upon the Devil with a fierce utterance, he began to strike out into the air as if he imagined himself to be puncturing that illustrious person's ethereal darkness before him.

Evidently, this much excited individual had been trying to settle in his mind the why and wherefore of his being located in that benighted region ; and with poor success, to judge from the questions he propounded to Monsieur. He was in Paris once more ; he had been there eight days, but those eight days had seemed to him the longest that he had ever spent during his whole life, longer perhaps than had been the entire four years that the gay Capital had formerly harbored him. Paris was changed to him—sadly changed. The green pastures in which he had sported, careless and free, were now laid desolate, or else crowded with strange faces ; the shrubs and flowers that had been his delight were withered and gone ; even the streets wore a different aspect, the air seemed more impure, and the wine as well,—that was not the same. Poor man, he was sadly homesick, he longed to see his native shore again ; but the mere thought deepened his depression. It was now the beginning of the stormy season, and the discomforts which one was sure to meet with at this time in crossing the ocean were enough to make the bravest hesitate. Ordinarily, he would not have thought of such things, however, if the fancy had taken him, but with what he had just been through, he did not feel tempted. Probably the knowledge that mis-

fortune never travels singly was no encouragement. In truth, he was about as miserable at that moment as any being well can be, who has nothing to do but to dwell upon his own misery.

His first move had been to rid himself of his travelling companion ; to do which he had chosen for his abiding place the hotel that advertised the highest tariff on the catalogue ; for he knew Legis would not follow him there from a principle he had of his own. It was a skillful manoeuvre. Next he set out in search of Mr. Kilman Kon by way of a preliminary. But calling at the address given him by Briggs and sending up his card, he was presently informed by the servant returning that Mr. Kon was not at home. This with an expression of countenance so indicative of an inward dread of the fate of Ananias that Hood made a note of the same in his mind. It was the first damper. Next move, having nothing better to do, he proceeded, forthwith, to the headquarters of the chief of police ; but here he was little cheered to find, through a skillful gaining of the confidence of an important functionary there, that the whole department still clung to the same old belief which he well remembered, and which very much corresponded to Paul's own confession in regard to himself. They held that Paul's escape was due wholly to the lack of crimi-

nating evidence. Had they ever thought of Desfous, the woman's husband, as a possible actor in the tragedy. Never ; it was nonsense.

The whole of that evening he spent in his own room waiting and hoping that Kilman might return his call, for he had left word with the servant that it would give him great pleasure to see Mr. Kon and that he intended remaining at home on purpose to receive him.

No Kilman came, however, not even a message from him to show that the attention was appreciated. At a late hour, giving up all hope, at last he stole out into the night like a restless spectre and strolled the streets for an hour or more. Then he made his way back as stealthily as he had gone forth and after a time he threw himself upon his bed, hoping that he might find a balm for his wearied soul in sweet unconsciousness. But sleep he could not, nor even could he rest he ; could but toss and toss, turning from side to side as if he were couched upon a bed of nettles. More than once he rose and paced the floor for a time through the cool damp night till the fever that burned within was chilled. Each time he threw himself upon his bed again and tossed and tossed. With the breaking of the day he sank into a sleep that lasted for scarcely more than one short hour.

That afternoon he called again at the house where Kilman was staying in the hope that he might, this time, secure an audience. But once more the servant brought him down word that Monsieur was out ; in the man's countenance was manifested the same dread of an impending calamity. Ordinarily, Hood would have gone up to his friend's room unannounced, but it seemed as if, of late, a great barrier had risen between them, and he felt that certain formalities were necessary to surmount it. So he turned from the house feeling bitterly disappointed, and much troubled in mind for his friend.

Later on, while walking aimlessly about the streets, not knowing what else to do with himself, an old familiar landmark came to view, which suggested a well remembered resort of the old days, near at hand ; turning a corner, he discovered the same old sign, that had guided him thither many a time, hanging from the lintel above the entrance. Yes, there were the flower-pots at the window and the flowers, they looked just the same as of old ; while within, faintly outlined through the smoke-charged atmosphere, old Jean Baptiste was discernible, not the least changed, seated there upon his throne like a statue, as if through all that time he had never moved.

Would he remember him?—In the old days the man's natural gruffness used to soften when he came ; always he had had a pleasant word of greeting for him. Now, as Hood entered the *café*, he received only the cold bow that was given to every stranger whose appearance was suggestive enough of sous and centimes or a possible franc. Had he changed so much since then or are the absent so soon forgotten ? One of the old waiters was there ; his was the only other familiar countenance that he saw in the *café*. The man recognized him after a moment and came over to him. What had become of all the *habitués* of that time : Students, artists, writers for the press ; boon companions in his lighter moods ?—Loisette, who was in the Polytechnique then ?—Gone to the States and doing well. Gavaudan, the scamp, who made them all merry ?—Dead ; drowned himself for the want of a sou. How sad ! And Grivolin who drew comic sketches ?—Making a name for himself amongst the artists ; now and then he would appear there, but not often.

Desfous ?—That was the worst of all ; never had there been a greater surprise—the most generous and kind-hearted amongst them—a refugee from justice. The man did not know what had become of him.

Hood had clung to this last chance of discovering something new concerning the forger ; the man, he thought, might have picked up a few odd bits of gossip about the place that could have furthered his purposes in some way ;—but he learned nothing that brought him encouragement. Had Mr. Kon, the American, been there lately ?—He had not been seen. Plainly, something had come over the spirit of Mr. Kon's eccentricities. He must speak with him : he would make him tell his story to the Police ; something might come of it.

Next day Hood made one more effort to gain an audience with Mr. Kon, hoping that this time he might choose to be at home. But again he was confronted by the same equivocal statement, this time the announcement being made with an acrid bold-facedness that gave evidence of inward induration. It was plain that death must finally result here through petrification, from constant dread of the calamity, even if the yielding up of the ghost was not enforced as in him who spoke falsely. Hood turned away, much puzzled in mind to account for such strange behavior on the part of his old friend.

After his dinner that evening, he strolled the streets for a long time, and finally he dropped into a theatre in the hope of gaining distraction.

But the acting disgusted him, and, after enduring in patience for more than an hour, he rushed out into the air again. The deserted streets and the darkness he found less depressing than the tinsel and glare of the crowded hall. At last he returned to his hotel and went to bed. For the first time since his arrival on that side of the water he slept the whole night through.

Three times more, with the persistency of a dun, Hood called on Kilman Kon, but not once did he gain admission to that gentleman's presence. Nor did he once catch a glimpse of him although he haunted the street like a detective in the hope that he might come forth, or at least appear at his window. Even the messages which he left for him were unanswered.

It was on the evening following the afternoon of his latest unsuccessful effort to gain access to his friend that Hood was discovered in his own room, in a high state of unrest, putting tough questions to his Satanic Majesty, as herein already described. He was just on the point of reseating himself before his fire, having grown weary with this unsatisfactory performance, when, all at once, there came a faint knock at the door and immediately it swung slowly back, the person without, not waiting to be admitted. It was Mr. Kilman Kon who appeared in the opening.

· Kernochan !”

“Wright !”

Kilman closed the door behind him, and then he removed his hat from his head.

“For God’s sake, what has happened to you ?”

The sight of Kilman’s hair, which was turned snow white, had caused this hasty exclamation. His face was drawn and wrinkled like that of an old man, and his form had lost its healthful fullness and erect carriage. So changed was he in appearance that Hood did not feel sure that he was not dreaming.

“Hush ! take not the name of thy Maker in vain ; look to Him for help. I am the victim of sorcery and incantations : ’tis contagion ; look to yourself, there’s danger in me.”

Kilman’s voice sounded as if coming from the tomb.

“What nonsense is this, Kernochan ? Come, I am sick and tired and wretched. I beg of you, if you have any feelings at all, to desist.”

“Wretched ?—Bah ! ’tis but a word. If you were happy you would be happy ; there is the difference. When you live you live ; when you die you rot. I am enchanted, so I never die.”

“Who is the evil one that has done you this harm ?”

"It hath the guise of a woman. I have run away from her. I must go back to her soon, else she chastise me. You called on your old friend to-day."

"I have been to see you half-a-dozen times. You know you have been acting like a brute."

"Say demon : the man has shrunk to an atom and lies prisoned here in this foul bosom. Six times has the demon held a weight over your head to crush you ; the man put forth his arm each time and kept it from falling. The man has a secret."

"Tell me what is it ? For the love of Heaven, tell me ? Some terrible knowledge has been vexing your mind. Why did you not send for me long ago ?"

"You are human ; what could you do against spells and potions ? I am a demon and I love destruction ; I would have let the spirit loose within you that you do destruction, too."

"Tell me your secret ?"

"I have no secret. The demon is volatile as ether ; secrets would fly from it."

"Then tell me the secret that lies treasured in the bosom of the man."

"The man that is prisoned in the demon's entrails, holds a secret that he would disclose.—But hush !—she hath ears to hear the solar vibrations.

she listens at the key-hole. She hath eyes to see through the gloom of chaos ; she peers in at the window. She is in the chimney, smoke will not choke her."

"Speak ! the wind is up ; she will not hear you ; she is hilarious. Quick ! before the night is gone."

"I will whisper it then. Draw nearer to me ; listen : Cain was not jealous ; he was too indifferent a subject for that. Mark you ! Cain slew his brother for the pretty brilliants that Satan's wife had hanging at her bosom. Satan is dead. Did you not know it ?"

"Satan is dead, but his queen survives him. *Vive la reine ! Vive la Hecate ! Vive la Medusa !*"

"Long live the queen ! long live the fury ! She is a she-devil ; she is more dangerous than Satan."

"She has metamorphosed you ?"

"She has transmuted the flesh, but the man still exists within. I am her demon, I am the cat's mouse ; she would eat me but she fears lest Homo disagree with her. Homo is imperishable ; she tries to pluck him from the demon's vitals, but she cannot. She is powerless in that. Homo is her enemy ; he loathes her, he would tear her limb from limb, were she human ; he would pluck

out her eyes and wear them for jewels, he would tear out her heart and eat it that he might have new courage. His deep abhorrence she knew too well, so she shut him up in the heart of a demon. The demon loves her, he worships her; in her presence he falls upon his face and rolls in the dust, creeps up to her on his belly, rubs against her limbs, licks her hand, fawns about her, happy if she caresses, mournful when she frowns. She teaches him to perform that he shall amuse her: he is a lion and he roars, he is a baboon and disports before her, he is a crow and picks at men's bones, he is a snake and wriggles about, then he sticks forth his fangs and the air is poisoned. She is most pleased at this, for then Homo groans within and she thinks the snake rattles."

"There are others in her retinue, angels of darkness, fallen seraphims. Is Cain among them?"

"Ay, Cain is her trusted advisor; of all he is her favorite. He sprang from Eve's womb; he was begotten by the Devil; none are more malignant than he."

"You mean Paul?"

"Hush! in the name of all that is evil. To speak, that word is death. Even the monster shudders at the sound. He could kill thee for uttering it. What is the hour; the demon has

been too long away and yearns to be once more with her."

"Stay ! let the monster be silent. Let Homo answer : is it not so ? Did not he betray his brother for gold ?"

"Before God, it is the truth.—No, no, it is not so ; it is a lie. He wears the mark of Cain upon his brow."

"The demon denies it, Homo declares it to be true."

"Believe the voice of whom you will. The hours are twinkling ; one must go or else be frowned upon. The monster wishes it and Homo must obey."

"You shall not leave the place, I forbid it."

"You restrain me ?—It is madness. You could not keep me for a moment. The Queen of Darkness will come searching for me. I will fly up the chimney, I will dance out the window, I will penetrate the walls as light through glass. She will open the door and bid you to follow. Unhand me, lest you be poisoned to death. There's fatal infection in my touch. We go from you : Homo bids you farewell ; the demon curses you."

"Go, if you must ;—but first tell me ; let the demon be silent ; tell me all that you have learned of *this* unnatural being's crime."

“Many times have the flint and steel clashed and then have been sprinkled upon the bare shoulders of Homo, splinters of moulten knowledge that have burned into the flesh, like scalding tears. Many a time has Homo striven to free himself that he might come to you and unburden himself of the fearful secret that was feeding upon his vitals. But he had been a prisoner, and his jailer guarded him with a watchfulness that never faltered. To-night Homo waxed mighty and dragged the monster with him that was placed on guard. Alas, 'twas but the last sputtering of the candle before the flame expires ; now his jailer drags him back once more to torments and despair. Poor Homo ! Forgive him, for he meant well. Pray for him, though it can avail naught. Farewell, farewell ! He goes away to everlasting death ; it is the last of your old friend. Homo is cursed ! Farewell !

CHAPTER XXII.

VALE.

The past, the present, and the future : recollection, realization, hope. A realm of crumbling ruins and gaunt, fleshless spectres is the past, the now a world of hateful existences ; the future—alluring, beautiful, though the grave doth yawn. Oh, patient reader, word-painting pales before the glaring light of truth, and perhaps, following this gloomy and soul-harrowing recital, thou hast smiled to think how powerless the pen to give a strong and faithful coloring to thine own bitter experiences. But, after all, pain hath its limitations ; even to the fathomless pit of woe there is a bottom, and earthly storms descend on every head alike. Ah, why inveigh against the elements ! dost thou think the whirlwind hath time to discriminate betwixt one mortal atom and another ? To-day thy bungalo stands in the lightning's path—and for a day the world misses thee from its midst. To-morrow the raging torrent engulfs thy neighbor's estates and he becomes a mere sum-swellng cipher all at once. To-mor-

row—but to-morrow finds an end for one and all. Be it so, too long has the angry tumult of contending armaments been ringing in thine ears ; too long, the discordant clanging of spirits out of tune ; ay, thine eyes too long offended with the gaudy stage painting and fatuous pyrotechnics of human imbecility. Thou art wearied, and would rest ; so with the delicious sense that comes of restful sleep, let us now dream, and let us dream of an ideal, not seek to summon up realities that, at the best, have scowling countenances and dark, envious bosoms, ever amongst their retinues.

Two hearts united ; two souls commingling, as two meeting streams that have pursued their lonely courses from the mountain side apart. Henceforward shall they travel life's weary way together, and while they follow on through doleful vales and many a deep and treacherous morass, there shall be no parting more. Joy, in the sweet communion of two noble minds, is theirs ; sorrows there may be, but sorrows born together are but the off-sets to a greater happiness. Want they know not, for they are strong, courageous and persevering, though luxuries do not attend to implant the seeds of ennui and decay. No need of flare and tinsel here to excite dull senses into life ; no gaudy feathers and cock-

crows, to make the world aware of their existence. Hatred and envy find here no place—not one of all the mighty ills of puny temporals.

It is an existence of peace and sweet content ; it is an existence fraught with pleasure of a calm and restful type ; it is an existence where dark promptings do not awake, and where disinterested thoughts are possible, and where cold selfishness doth not invade, even selfishness to martyrdom that hath about it so much impudent display. Staunch is the bark that bears them across life's tempestuous ocean, for mutual love, mutual respect, mutual conceding, are thews and sinews of inseparable unity ; and firm the hand, and clear the eye that guides it on. Here is beheld, transcendent, the pure, the beautiful, the true ; and here beheld the royal vestments of esteem and confidence ; here that imperial edifice which courage and unswerving rectitude alone can build ; and here, above all, humility and singleness of heart.

But hark ! there comes the sound of merry voices keeping time to the rhythm of twinkling feet, and now lithe forms appear, dancing round about in all the harmless glee of childish innocence. What symphony in all the world more sweet than the gladsome laughter of children at *their play* ! What tones more sensuous and



impassioned ever flowed from a celestial orchestra? What else so quick can cause the heart of adamant to melt? Lightly in their play, hither and thither they go tripping, thoughtless and free, happy and gay; it is naught to them if care doth stalk about; they have no sins to be accounted for; no castles to be built on treacherous sands; no mountains climbed of their own piling up. What matters it if men do toil and sweat, and fret and fume and tear themselves in woe; they have their bright spirits buoyant as the morn; they have the trust and hopefulness of youth. So long as they do sport and prattle, sorrow durst not enter here.

But stay!—through the golden halo appears a form of an aspect that doth call to mind things which for long have been as shadowy recollections. Seamed is that countenance with the tracings of passed years and strangely drawn; those strong decided lineaments, though now they speak of peace and calm content alone, disclose more plainly than could printed symbols the secrets of dark hours and bitter conflicts which a mute and uncomplaining bosom hath known. And now, running towards him, comes a baby form with arms outstretched, calling gleefully; and with a merry laugh he takes the child upon his knee. While it is prattling to him with all

the artlessness of childhood he gazes fixedly upon the baby features ; all at once there passes across his face the tinge of unutterable sadness ; but quickly other forms gather round his knee and in an instant it is gone, and the expression of that firm visage tells no more of aught but inward tranquillity.

Hush !—there wakens all at once the chilling sound as of vipers wrangling in their covert ; now plainly audible becomes the direful chafing of their scaly integuments, as they move restlessly about, one upon the other ; and now a serpent's head is held up, and now one more, and now one more. But all at once, with an imperious wave, a strong arm is uplifted, and instantly their hissing voices cease ; a sinuous form glides swiftly off into the darkness,—another,—yet another ;—all are gone, and their malevolent voices no more are heard.

THE END.





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